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THE MOMENTS OF LOVE.

BY CALE DUNN.

Love's brightest moments!
  How cheering are they!
They banish our sorrows,
  Like exiles away.
They fall on the heart,
  Like the enrapturing beams,
That dance on the soul,
  In the island of dreams.

They open the mind,
  Like a flower in bloom,
And cover with smiles,
  The fears of the tomb.
They dress virtue bright,
  In a poetic ray,
As fair as the wreath,
  On the forehead of day.

Love's brightest moments,
  Uniting in rhyme,
Are the most precious sands,
  In the hour-glass of time.
They breathe on the ear,
  Like the voice of a kiss,
And apparel the soul
  In a garment of bliss.

The moments of love,
  Are the best of our life,
They heal all the wounds
  That are given by strife.
And there are no moments,
  On earth or above,
That can soften the heart,
  Like the moments of love.

PORTCHESTER, May, 1856.

ON NAPOLEON THE GREAT.

Let the silent sepulchre,
  Resound with cry of woe;
Place on that head a gory crown,
  A bloody stream to flow.
And stained the vein'd marble pale
  With dying crimson red—
Then close the ponderous marble tomb
  Upon the silent dead.

A CARD.

The undersigned, on the occasion of the commencement of the present Tale, takes this opportunity to inform his friends that he has entered into a contract with MR. BONNER to write exclusively for the NEW YORK LEDGER. He desires to call particular attention to this arrangement, because reports have been circulated that he is writing for a journal published in another city. These reports, perhaps grew out of the fact that a few sketches of his, written some time ago, were recently published in a Boston paper; but not a single line has the undersigned written for any paper except the LEDGER, since the contract with MR. BONNER was made. In conclusion, he would say to his old friends who for several years have done him the honor to welcome his productions so warmly, that they will find his writings in future only in the LEDGER. He would add that, apart from his own contributions, they will find the LEDGER an excellent family paper; altogether the cheapest and best in the country; and he believes that they will derive as much pleasure in reading it as he experiences in writing for it. The liberal principles upon which it is conducted have already made it what it deserves to be—a universal favorite.

SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

New York, May 24, 1856.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1856, by ROBERT BONNER, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of New York.

THE STORM SECRET.

A STORY OF SHIP AND SHORE.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

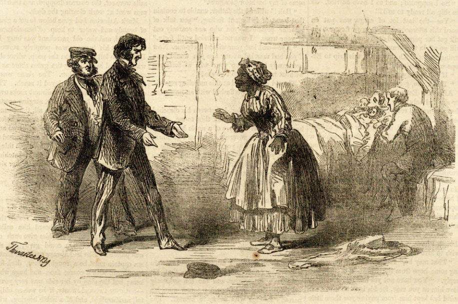
Author of the "THE GUN-MAKER OF MOSCOW," and also of the following tales which have recently been published elsewhere under various *noms de plume*:—"THE TEXAN CRUISER," "BEN HAMED; *or The Children of Fate*," "HENRY LA NUIT," "ALICE THE FISHER GIRL," "THE OCEAN MARTYR," "THE STORM CHILDREN," "THE KING AND COBBLER," "IVAN THE SERF," and "THE SEA LION," together with all the stories purporting to have been written by AUSTIN C. BURDICK.

CHAPTER I.

A STORM, AND ITS FEARFUL RESULT.

It was on the evening of the 7th of November, and the good ship Red Lion had entered the broad Atlantic on her way home from the Indies. She left Cape Town on the 5th, and was just losing sight of the African coast, having stood up towards St. Helena. But the wind had now died away almost to a perfect calm. With the setting of the sun the breeze had fallen, and now, two hours later, the ship lay without motion save such as came from the long, lazy swells of water that rolled in shoreward upon the ocean's bosom. The heavy canvass flapped against the masts, and the slack ropes rattled and creaked as they came together or worked spasmodically through the blocks. The moon was up, and its beams fell upon a glassy surface, not dancing as usual, but rolling up and down like a field of silver in gentle undulations.

Captain Adam Phillips stood near the wheel, and by his side was a passenger named Atherton—John Atherton. The former was master of the ship. He was a short, thick-set man, with dark features—dark from exposure,—black hair and eyes, and exhibiting one of those peculir conformations which mark the regular "sea dog." He had followed the sea from his earliest boyhood, and was accounted one of the best ship-masters in the country. Though by nature rough and harsh, yet a good judgment and long experience with the world had worked him down to a kind, considerate man; and if his passions were not aroused he seldom departed from the standard of true manhood. He knew well how prone was his heart to cherish evil, and he worked hard to keep it out.


Thwaites N.Y.

THE CONFUSION IN REGARD TO THE IDENTITY OF THE BABES.

John Atherton was a man some forty years of age; tall and commanding in person; with a bold, frank countenance; curling hair of a nut-brown hue; large hazel eyes, and a brow of more than ordinary nobleness of developement. He was a merchant of great wealth, and was now returning from a business visit to India. His wife was on board the ship, having accompanied him on his voyage. She was a mild, light-haired, blue-eyed woman, only five-and-twenty years of age, and had married her husband from pure love, for when she promised to be his she knew not of his wealth. And he, too, loved his gentle wife. He almost worshipped her, and well he might, for she watched over his welfare with all her power of vigilance, and in the hour of pain or trouble she was ever by his side with her smile and word of cheer. But Agnes Atherton was not alone. Not only had she her own attendant for company, but Mrs. Phillips, the captain's wife, was also on board.

"Captain Phillips," spoke the merchant, after they had looked all around the horizon, "what do you make of this?"

"I shall hardly think of making anything out of it," returned the Captain, with a smile. "Some one more powerful than we will make what he pleases out of it. But, to speak seriously, I fear that we shall have a storm."

"A bad one, do you think?" the merchant asked—and he spoke eagerly, for there was one below of whom he thought more than of himself.

"I don't know about that, sir. I think it will be a hard blow; but 'bad is as bad does,' as the saying is. At all events, I don't apprehend much danger. If it should be a long one our women may be a bit seasick once more."

"Oh—I didn't speak of danger," resumed Atherton; "I only feared one of these severe storms on the very grounds of which you have spoken: Poor Agnes suffers much from them, and at this present time I have a double reason for wishing her kept quiet and comfortable."

"So have I in behalf of my wife," added the captain. "Yet I fear we shall have a severe blow, though there may not be a long storm. I don't like these kind of calms on this coast. Don't you feel how light and rarified this atmosphere is?"

"Yes—I have been noticing it some time."

At this moment a young female came up from the cabin and touched Mr. Atherton on the elbow. Her name was Mary Lane—a small, cheerful girl, some twenty years of age, with auburn hair and bright grey eyes, and who had come to attend the merchant's young wife.

"What is it, Mary?" the gentleman asked.

"My lady wishes to see you, sir," she replied, as she turned to go back to the cabin.

Atherton followed her down, and went at once to his wife's state-room. He found her upon the bed, and apparently much distressed. She smiled when she saw him, and then covered her face with her thin white hands.

"What is it, Agnes?" he asked, at the same time bending over and kissing his wife upon the brow.

She placed one arm about his neck and whispered in his ear. He heard her through, and then started up.

"Are you sure?" he uttered, eagerly and anxiously.

"Most certainly I am," she answered him.

He then wound his arms about her frail form, and having held her to his bosom for some moments he started up and left the room. In the cabin he found the surgeon—an Englishman who had been practicing some years in Calcutta, and who was now on his way to visit America. He whispered to the man of medicine, and the latter immediately arose and went into the room where Agnes Atherton was.

John Atherton was nervous and uneasy, and yet he was happy. Two score years had passed over his head, and now for the first time had he the prospect of becoming a father. No wonder his step was tremulous as he paced to and fro across the cabin floor.

Ere long the door of the captain's room was opened, and a negro woman came out. She went on deck, and in a few moments more Phillips followed her down and hastened to his room. When he came out he was very nervous and flurried.

"Where is the doctor?" he asked of Atherton, at the same time moving instinctively towards the room of the surgeon.

"He's in my room," said the merchant.

"But he must come to mine at once."

"Why—what's to pay, captain?"

"Never mind. He must see my wife."

"But he is now with mine."

"Eh?—With yours? Is your wife really down?"

"Yes."

"And we are both to be made fathers in a calm. May the augury prove happy."

"But on the verge of a storm," suggested Atherton.

"Never mind," resumed Phillips. "Go and tell the doctor to come to me as soon as possible."

Mr. Atherton went and delivered the message, and ere many minutes the surgeon came out and went to attend the new caller.

It was now nine o'clock, and the atmosphere had become oppressive in the extreme. The men had all left the forecastle to get a breath of fresh air on deck, but they found matters but little better there. The air seemed heated and expanded like gas, and the lungs scarcely moved with its presence. Ever and anon a slight puff would come and cause the heavy sails to tremble, but it brought no freshness with it. It came from the heated region, and was only like a puff from a furnace. The captain had now come upon deck again, and having looked around a few moments he ordered his mate to prepare for a storm.

"It will come," he said, as he cast his eyes to the southward and westward, where a low line of dark, gloomy red marked the horizon. "It will come; and when it does come it will be heavy. Furl the light sails, and send down the topgallant masts. Close-reef the topsails and then furl them. We must lay low."

In the meantime there was much suffering in the cabin. The surgeon came up and informed the captain that the women would literally suffocate if they could not come on deck; and in a moment more Atherton came up with the same complaint.

"By my soul," the latter cried, "they cannot live down there. My room is like an oven, and my wife can hardly breathe. She cannot live through it thus."

"But what can we do?" asked Phillips, in a puzzled state of mind.

"Rig up some kind of an awning here on the poop," said the surgeon. "It must be done."

"But the storm may break at any moment," urged the captain.

"They'd better be up here in a storm than down there in such suffocating misery as they're in now."

At this moment the negro woman came hurrying on deck, and the manner in which she breathed showed that her lungs were well nigh exhausted.

"Mas'r," she gasped, "mis'us 'll surely die to def down dar. She can't breve a bit."

"Did she send you up?" Phillips asked.

"Yas, mas'r. She spoked as well as she could. But she'll die—she will—ef she stays dar."

At this Phillips went down, and when he entered the cabin he knew that no delicate woman could easily survive the expected event in such an atmosphere. He entered his room, and there he found his wife gasping for breath, and suffering much.

"O, Adam!" she uttered, in a forced whisper, "if you would save me have me carried out from here!"

"I will," he returned; and then he hastened on deck.

In the starboard corner of the poop he had a stout awning raised, and as soon as it could be done he had plenty of bedding brought up, and then he bade the surgeon attend to getting up the women. Ere long the two wives were brought on deck, and though the atmosphere was anything but grateful, yet they felt much relief, for they could certainly breathe more freely. They found the newly contrived place very comfortable in other respects.

* * * * *

It was just midnight, and from the small tent upon the deck of the Red Lion came the wails of two infants. Two more souls had been placed in tenements of clay and started upon the tide of life. Mr. Atherton and the captain were anxious, for the doctor had not yet dared to move his patients, and the storm was nigh at hand. A low, rumbling sound, something like distant thunder, came over the water from the south'rd and west'rd, and the heavens began to grow dark. It did not seem to be the darkness of rising clouds, but more like the sudden coming of a darker night, as though a pall were suddenly drawn over the sea. And now came cool, damp puffs across the water, and the low, deep rumbling grew louder and louder.

"My soul!" gasped Atherton, "we must get them below as soon as possible. The storm must break very soon."

"May we move them, doctor?" the captain asked.

"Yes—we may run the risk, though I do sincerely believe they would not now be alive had they been kept below."

"Then hasten!" cried Atherton, all excited fear.

At that moment an exclamation from the helmsman attracted their attention, and on looking around they beheld a scene that startled them with horror. Upon the larboard quarter was a long line of foam, wearing a crest of phosphorescent brightness, which came tumbling, surging on at a fearful rate. The roar was almost deafening.

"Off with the trysail!" shouted the captain, "Off with it, and let her have the staysail alone. I expect it will go, but it may help get us before the gale."

In a few moments more the ship lay with all her canvass off save the reefed fore-staysail, and the gale was coming on her larboard quarter. As quickly as possible the two mothers were lifted up by stout men, and taken out from under the awning.

"Make haste! Oh! in God's name, make haste!" cried Atherton, in an agonizing tone.

But even as he spoke the storm-demon had come. Four stout men carried the captain's wife upon a mattrass, and behind came four more bearing Mrs. Atherton in the same manner, while the negress and Mary Lane followed with the infants.

There came one deep groan from the merchant, and then the fell blow came. The crest which had been seen rode upon the top of a high sea, and as the mountain of water struck the ship she was buried beneath it. It broke over the quarter, and swept the deck fore and aft, and for a few moments the noble bark seemed entirely overcome, but gradually she struggled up from the storm-grasp, and then, with one mighty throe, she darted off before it.

"Where is my wife?—my child?" cried Atherton, leaping up from the scuppers, where he had been entirely buried in water.

The only answer he received was a like cry from Phillips.

The chief mate saw the position in which his commander was placed, and he at once took charge of the ship, and with the help of the balance-reefed mizzen he contrived to get her up to the wind, though she came very nigh being thrown upon her beam-ends in the operation. But 'twas madness to think of running before such a gale when the lee shore was not over sixty miles distant.

In the meantime lanterns had been brought, and the quarter-deck searched. Those four men who had borne Mrs. Phillips were found, and their charge was safe; but of those who carried Agnes Atherton only one was left! And where was the burden they bore? Alas! it was gone! Agnes and Mary Lane both were missing!

"Oh, God! my wife and child! Both gone! both gone!" the bereaved husband cried.

"No, mas'r," shouted the old negro woman, "I'se got de chile. Mary gub it to me when she jumped for her missus."

"Then carry it below. My child may be safe; but oh! at what a fearful cost!"

In a few minutes more the party were in the cabin. Another search had been made about the deck, but Agnes Atherton and Mary Lane were gone; and the three noble fellows who had helped bear the new-made mother!

"Could a boat be lowered?" asked the merchant, deliriously.

"Good heavens, no!" returned the captain; "a boat would not live to have the falls unhooked. Oh! would to God there was some help for your loss, but there is none, save what God in his own mercy may do. Even to change the course of the ship would be sure destruction, for the sea is rising at every moment, They are gone—give them to God!"

With a deep groan John Atherton sank down and bowed his head. He saw that nothing could be done more than had already been accomplished. His own sense told him that the captain had spoken truly, and with a reluctant, breaking heart he murmured—

"God's will be done!"

Oh, John Atherton had loved that gentle wife,—he had loved her with all the fervor of his stout heart and noble soul; and it seemed now as though life itself was gone. With a fearful shudder he let his thoughts run into the future, and for the while he could only see darkness and gloom to be with him in all the long days to come. But at length his mind turned to his child, and he started up.

"Chloe," he cried, "where is my child?"

"Here, mas'r—dey's boff wid missus." And thus speaking the negress led the way to the captain's state-room, where both the infants lay upon the bosom of the surviving mother. Capt. Phillips was there soothing his wife, while the surgeon was binding up the right arm of one of the infants which had got cut in some way during the ordeal on deck.

"Chloe, which is my child?" Mr. Atherton asked.

"Which am yourn, mas'r?" the woman uttered, gazing up into the merchant's face.

"Yes—which is mine?"

"Bress de Lord, I don't know, mas'r."

"What?" cried Phillips, starting quickly up. "Don't you know these infant's apart?"

"No, mas'r, I doesn't. How should I? When dat sea come and Miss Mary seed her missus a goin' she chucked her chilo in my arms, tinking, I s'pose, she'd help save de dear good woman; but yer see 'stead ob dat she got lost, too. But de berry moment ob time dat I got de children, boff of 'em, in my arms, I cotched de sea slap in de face, and ober I went. When I picked I'seself up I found de little ones boff in a heap, rite in de bunt ob de sail what we'd had for a tent, an' jes' as quick as I could I cotched 'em up an' made a dive for de cab'n."

"But which child was it that had his arm cut?" asked Mr. Atherton.

"Sure I doesn't know, mas'r," the negress returned, gazing first upon one infant, and then upon the other.

And no wonder the poor woman was puzzled. There lay two infants, "as alike as two peas," and both dressed in the same manner. Both the expectant mothers had worked together, and they had fashioned the garments for their offspring from the same material, and from the same patterns. So now the little ones lay together, dressed alike, and without the least physical sign for a distinction, save that one of them had a wound upon the right arm.

"But surely," cried Atherton, in a frenzy of excitement, "you should know which of the children was cut."

"Aye," added Phillips—"you should know that."

"But I doesn't know noff'n 'bout it," persisted Chloe. "All I know is, dey's boff boys, an' boff jes' alike.

For awhile the party were silent, but at length the captain's eyes gleamed with a new thought.

"Mr. Atherton," he said, as he turned suddenly towards that gentleman, "this is a very unfortunate business, but I think it may yet be decided fairly. What is there more sure, next to an absolute certainty, than a mother's instinctive love. My wife may know her own."

Mr. Atherton caught at the plan, and agreed at once to leave it to the living mother. And so it was done.

Mrs. Phillips gazed upon the two infants for a long while in speechless anxiety. The little fellow who had had his arm bound up was yet sobbing with pain, and he nestled more closely to the warm breast than did the other. The woman's sympathy was awakened, and she clasped the sobbing, wounded one to her bosom and said it was her own child.

So the children were marked from that hour, and the living mother nursed them both.

The storm raged, and the mad sea rolled on in crashing waves; but the noble ship stood bravely up. Mr. Atherton came on deck to cool his feverish brow. He thought of his wife, and he thought of the two infants below. He was resolved to speak not a word against the decision which had been made; and yet he, too, had felt his soul yearn towards the wounded child.

"Alas!" he murmured, "it is a secret yet, for the instinct of the living mother has not solved it. The secret is locked up in the storm, and until the sea gives up its dead I may not know the truth!"

CHAPTER II.

CLOUDS ON ALL HANDS.

Since that night, when the ship Red Lion rode out the furious gale upon the African coast, and the two infants were born amid the storm, twenty-one years have passed away into the tomb of time. Those who were then in the noon of life have grown old—straight forms have become bent—dark and glossy heads have grown grey—young men and maidens have marched on to the meridian of their days, and those who were infants then have now become men and women grown. But Life has not had all the work to itself. Death has been busy during that score and one of years, and the broad way to the tomb has been often travelled.

It was early evening, and in the parlor of one of the most sumptuous dwellings of New York city sat the retired merchant, John Atherton. Ah, he has changed most wonderfully. The old grief still gnaws at his heart, and when he is all alone, as now, his mind will wander back over those long years agone to that fearful night when the storm robbed him of his wife. He had never wished for another. Many a beautiful woman had coveted his vast wealth, and tried hard to win his heart; but he had no heart to give. His first, his last, his only love was snatched away from him when the storm demon came, and he could never love again. His once noble form was bent, and the hair which used to cluster about the high brow in glossy brown curls had grown crisp and grey, and the top of the head was bare to the blasts which swept over it. And then his features had grown spare and furrowed, and a sort of harshness which was not there before had come upon them. In fact, he was a different man from what we found him when first we saw him. Long sorrow had shut up his heart, and present troubles had warped and soured his soul.

The old man sat in his great chair with his eyes closed, and his hands were clasped upon his knees. His lips moved, but no sound came forth. Presently one of the doors of the apartment opened, and a young girl entered. She was not far from nineteen years of age. In form she was below the medium height, rather full, with a skin as pure and delicate as alabaster, and yet blooming with health. Her hair was of a rich brown, and her eyes of a deep, liquid blue. She was a beautiful being, and as good as she was beautiful. Such was Esther Lyman, an orphan who had been with Mr. Atherton several years. Her father had been Atherton's business partner, and when he died he gave his child into the hands of his friend, and bade him care for and protect her as though she were his own. Her mother had died when she was but a child, and thus, when she came to find a home beneath the old merchant's roof she gave him her whole heart with all its childish confidence and willing obedience to just control.

"Well, father," she uttered, as she tripped lightly forward and placed her hand upon the old man's arm, "I am all ready for the start."

"Ah—so quick? Good. You are smart, Esther. We shall be off by noon to-morrow."

"So I supposed; and so I have hurried. Is the ship all ready to sail?"

"Yes—the last lot of cargo was put on board this afternoon: To-morrow forenoon she will get her papers and drop down, and then we will go off in the steam-tug. So I have made arrangements. Ah, my child, this trip to Europe will benefit you."

"If it benefits you, father, I shall be happy."

"Thank you, gentle one."

After this Esther turned to leave the room, for she had only come to let her protector know that she was all ready, but the old man called her back.

"Esther," he said, drawing her closer to him, "I wish to speak with you further touching a subject I have once before broached. You know what I mean."

"Speak on, sir," murmured the maiden, trembling perceptibly.

"I allude to your marrying with my son. He loves you well, and I know that he is lost if he loses you. We will make this trip to Europe, and either there, or when we return, the thing shall be consummated. I know you will not tell me nay."

"No, no, my best friend, I shall not say nay, though I have not yet loved Mark as I should wish to love my husband."

"That may be," returned the old man, gaining some hope from the frankness of the girl's reply. "You have not yet had opportunity to love him as you may, for his ignorance of your mind has kept him from paying you those little attentions which a woman expects from the man who loves her."

"Ah, sir," replied Esther, with a slight shake of the head, "I fear you are mistaken there. In the true heart the little attentions of which you speak may please, but they are not necessary to create love. The heart has a will of its own above all human ken, and its love must be the result of its direct appreciation."

"Never mind. I know you may love Mark if you will; and if you would make me happy, and cause me to bless you, you will become his wife. Think of this, Esther. Reflect upon it, and school your heart to the love I ask for my boy. You will find it easy, I know. Let your thoughts be favorable to it—look upon it as an inevitable event of your life, and then you will come to view it favorably. Do you not understand me?"

"Yes, sir," the fair girl murmured, with her head bowed.

"And look ye, farther: Be sure and not let your feelings run away with the idea that this is something unpleasant which must be forced upon you. I know how prone the young are to look with aversion upon everything which is put upon them by another,—the same as a child dislikes anything which is called work, but at the same time will labor with pleasure ten times as hard if it be only some play which he has chosen. Remember this, and look upon the union in its brightest light. Mark will inherit all my property, so you must be aware that your wealth can have no attractions for him. He loves you for your own worth, and cannot fail of making you a good, kind husband. Think of this; and think as I have told you.——There—Good night."

The old man imprinted a kiss upon her fair cheek as he spoke, and she then turned from the room. She went up to her own chamber, and there she sank down upon her bed, and covering her face in the quilt she burst into tears. She was not really unhappy, but a strange, indefinable gloom had settled down upon her—a sort of cloud which threw its shadow into the future—and her soul was sad. She remembered her orphaned state, and the old cry for her mother went up from her soul. She knew little of Mark Atherton, but she felt sure she could never love him, and she knew she must pain her guardian when she refused him.

Shortly after Esther left the old man's presence Mark Atherton entered. He was twenty-one years of age, though in some respects he looked older. Those who knew him best, and knew of his daily walks when away from his house, said that 'twas dissipation which gave him that old look. He was below the medium height, quite thick-set, with black hair and black eyes, and with features which were far from handsome. His brow was low and contracted, and the base of his head, where the animal passions are developed, was broad and full.

"Well, governor," he said, as he threw himself upon one of the lounges with a free and easy sort of an air, as though he were speaking with a convivial companion rather than with his father, "how blows the wind now?"

"To what do you allude, my son?" the old man asked, looking around with a pained expression of countenance.

"Why—to the girl, of course. To Miss Esther Lyman."

"I have spoken to her, Mark, and she has not refused you. I think she will yet be your wife; but I do trust that you will be what you have promised me."

"Of course I will," returned the youth, with a mock solemn look. "When the delightful creature is my wife I'll be a real judge for soberness; and as for morality—why, two deacons and a priest might approach my standard, but nothing less. Mark that."

A cloud flitted across the old man's brow, and a deep pain-mark was upon his face, for he saw plainly that the youth spoke only in broad, coarse levity. But he put back the rising indignation, and then, in carefully modulated tones he said,—

"Ah, my son, you promised me, if I would gain her hand for you, that you would commence at once and break from all your evil ways."

"Evil ways, sir?" uttered the youth, affecting indignant surprise. "You speak without thought, sir. I promised that I would give up some of my bachelor pleasures."

"Bah!" uttered the father, unable to contain that burst of indignant feeling, "*you* talk of *bachelor* pleasures—you who are scarcely out of your teens. I was not married until forty."

"Aye—and lost your wife at forty-one. Now if you had married at my age you would have been ready to give up your wife at forty-one without trouble. Don't ye see?"

The old man started at this unfeeling remark, and his still dark eye flashed with an unwonted fire.

"Wretch!" he uttered, between his clenched teeth. "how dare you speak thus to me. You know nothing of the love of a noble heart."

"Come, come, governor, that won't go down, You shouldn't praise yourself at the expense of another, you know. No doubt your heart was very tender at forty, but very tough now. But, *n'importe*—you have spoken with Esther, and she will be mine. Egad, she's the handsomest team in the city, I do believe. Won't she look splendidly at the head of my table."

"And is that all you care for her?" asked the old man, with a slight shudder. "Do you not love her for her noble qualities of heart and soul as well as for her beauty of face and form?"

"To be sure I do. I've told you once I worship her."

For a few moments after this the two were silent—the father evidently wishing that his son were a better man, and the son evidently wondering how far he could trespass upon his parent's feelings with safety to himself. The youth was the first to break the silence.

"Now," he said, in a more respectful tone than he had before used, "how about our trip? Is the ship all ready?"

"Yes, Mark—and we are to go on board to-morrow, at about noon."

"Then I must be ready. Egad, but we'll have a glorious time on the trip. I shall enjoy it hugely. But say—Why couldn't Esther and I be married before we start?"

"No, sir," quickly responded the father. "Such a thing cannot be listened to. And mind you one thing further: You have got to make yourself agreeable to the fair girl, for as sure as I live she shall not marry you against her will. And one thing further:" he continued, growing more earnest in tone and look, "If you so conduct yourself that she will not marry you, and I know that her decision is based upon your conduct, I will cut you off with one solitary shilling! Now mark me, for I am in earnest."

"No, no,—you don't mean that," uttered Mark, trying to appear at ease, but making a poor figure at it. "You don't mean that."

"I do.—As sure as I live, I do! If you lose Esther Lyman by the repulsiveness of your own conduct, save one single shilling every penny of my property shall go to another party. Now beware!"

"That's coming it rather hard," said Mark, as he arose and turned towards the door.

"It is not hard!" the old man cried, loudly and energetically. "If it is hard for you to be a decent man, then say so and have done with it. You understand me. All I ask is, that you behave yourself.——Remember—be ready at noon to-morrow."

This was a gentle hint for Mark to retire, and he did so; and when the old man was left once more alone he started up and commenced pacing the room.

"Oh! Just Heavens!" he cried, with his hands clasped before him, "can that boy be bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh? Oh! Agnes! Agnes! is this our child? Look down from heaven and tell me if this is he who cost you your noble life!—Oh! why does that phantom haunt me? Why does that wounded arm—that moaning infant—rise up before me continually? Mercy! mercy!—Oh! if this be really my child give me strength to bear with him!"

And so that old man was wont to cry out often. Ever and anon the terrible thought was with him, as it had been on that dark night a score of years before, that he had got the wrong child! He could not drive the fear-phantom away now. He could look back and see that other infant as it moaned with pain, and he remembered how his sympathies gathered about it then. And from that hour he had not been free from the doubt. And where was the other child? Alas, he knew not. He had searched for him during long, long, years, but he never could find him, nor a clue to him. He could find no Adam Phillips—no Mrs. Phillips—and nothing of the child they had claimed as their own.

And now, as the boy grew darker in character, these feelings and suspicions came on more strongly and agonizingly than ever before. Oh! for that secret which the fell storm snatched away in the bosom of his wife. He called for it often, for a strange, ruling presentiment was with him—had been with him from that hour—that his wife would have known her child—that either she or her attendant could have explained that wounded arm. But he called in vain. The secret was locked up from him as are all things locked up which the Storm Demon takes to himself!

CHAPTER III.

THE PIRATE.

The ship James Wilson had been towed down the river below Staten Island, and there she lay with her loosed sails hanging in the buntlines. At noon Mr. Atherton, and his son, and his ward, stepped on board the little steamer which was waiting for them, and were soon carried down to the ship which they boarded without difficulty. In a few moments more, while the tug was puffing its way back to the great city, the ship's top-sails were sheeted home, the anchor having already been hove up, and the yards hoisted. The noble craft swept gracefully around, and ere long she was on her course towards the broad Atlantic. The lofty sails were set, the courses dropped, and then the men went at work clearing the deck.

Mark Atherton had gone below to get a glass of brandy and water to keep off sea-sickness, as he said, and the old merchant was busy in seeing that his luggage was properly stowed. Esther was left alone upon the poop, where she was engaged in watching the green shore as it seemed to move past her. The scene was a new one to her, and she enjoyed it much. The dashing, foaming water; the distant rocks over which the waves beat in white, surging crests; the receeding city; and, above all, the boundless expanse of old ocean which opened before her, all tended to inspire her soul with awe and wonder; and her conceptions at once turned to the Great Ruler, in whose hand all these things were. She was thus standing, and watching the strange scene, when some one at her side spoke.

"Perhaps this is something new to you, lady," said the voice.

Esther turned, and saw the man whom she had at first recognised as commander of the ship. And yet she could hardly realise that she was correct. She had heard him called, captain, and she had heard him give such orders as only the captain could give; yet she was puzzled. She had always supposed that a sea captain must be a rough, stout, dark-featured man, with a coarse face, and huge whiskers; but the man by her side was very young—not over two-and-twenty, if he was so old,—tall and straight, and of a noble bearing, with a bright, full hazel eye; dark, curling brown hair, and features of more than ordinary manly beauty. In fact, he was the very ideal of a noble, handsome man, and his peculiar beauty was no more in the conformation of his form and features, than in the beaming light of intelligence and goodness that was manifest in every lineament of his countenance. His name was Lionel Walbert, as Esther had seen by the circular which her guardian had brought home before he engaged his passage.

"It is new, sir," the maiden replied, in answer to the remark she had heard. "I was never on board a large ship before."

"Then you will find much that is new," returned the captain, in a kind, winning tone. "But I trust we shall be able to make your situation so pleasant that you shall not regret having sailed with us."

"Thank you, sir," fervently answered Esther, at the same time raising her eyes to her companion's face. Their gaze met, and for a moment they seemed mutually riveted. The maiden was the first to drop her eyes, and as she did so she felt a strange fluttering of the heart. It was a sensation she had never before experienced, and so deep was it that when she spoke again her voice trembled in spite of all her efforts to prevent it.

"We have a stout ship, lady, and a faithful one," the young captain pursued, "and the crew are all excellent seamen and true to their duty. My officers are experienced and energetic, so that my own failings may be easily made up for.' He smiled as he said this, and though he surely meant to have spoken this last sentence in a light tone, yet his voice sank to a low key, and it came out tremulously.

"Ah," uttered Esther, looking up with a bright glow, "I know enough of the sea to be aware that inexperienced men are not placed in command of fine ships. And then, too, I think I heard one of the owners tell my guardian that captain Walbert was one of the best commanders he ever employed."

"Ah—you flatter me too much."

"No, no, sir. 'Tis not I who flatter; I only relate what one said who knew you well."

"But tell me," resumed the captain, quickly overcoming the perturbation caused by this last remark: "You speak of Mr. Atherton as your guardian. Then you are not his child?"

"No, sir. He is no kin of mine. Only my father was once his nearest friend and partner in business. I have no parents, sir, and know of but few relatives."

"Then you know the gloomy thoughts that at times cling about the orphan's heart," said the captain, with much feeling. "I, too, am an orphan," he continued, with more depth of tone. "It has been many a long year since I knew a parent's care and love. Ah, those who have fond parents to lean upon in the springtime of life scarcely realise the blessings they enjoy."

Esther raised her eyes to the face of the speaker, and they were moist and dim. He had touched the one chord in her soul that always stirred up the fountain of deepest feeling, and yet the emotion was calm and sweet.

"Ah," quickly added Walbert, as he noticed the bright tear-drops that stood upon the maiden's silken lashes, "pardon me if I have touched a painful theme. I knew not that your bereavement was so recent."

"No, no, sir," the fair girl softly replied. "The theme is far from being a painful one to me. If I shed a tear it is from the deep fountain of a child's love for those who have passed away, and not from pain. My bereavement is not recent. Many years have gone by since my mother went away into the spirit world, and my father has been absent with her several years, also.

At this moment Mark Atherton came up, and as he approached Esther's side the captain moved forward to where the mate was superintending the stowing of the anchor.

"Eh—what's the matter, little one?" cried Mark, as he detected the tear just rolling down Esther's fair cheek.

"Nothing," returned the maiden, wiping the tear quickly away.

"What was that chap saying to you?"

"He was only answering some of my questions touching the ship, and so on."

"'*And so on*,'" repeated Mark, in a jeering tone. "Perhaps you wouldn't have asked the questions, and the *so on's*, if the captain had been an old, ugly looking man, eh? He's scraping an acquaintance deuced quick, seems to me. You just steer clear of him, that's all."

With a flush of indignation upon her face, Esther turned and went below, where she found her maid had her room all prepared. She threw off her bonnet and shawl, and then sank down upon the sofa, and bowed her head upon her hands. Her first thought was of Mark Atherton, and she gave him a cool, calm season of consideration. At length she raised her head and told her maid that she might go on deck, if she wished. This maid was a short, black-eyed girl, some eighteen years of age, and named Sarah Wilkins. She loved her young mistress, and was a faithful servant and friend. She was anxious to go up and see the land once more, and with a simple expression of thanks she left the room. As soon as Esther was thus left alone she started to her feet, and with her hands clasped she uttered,—

"I cannot be that man's wife. It would be wicked to throw away my every earthly hope of joy just to please the whim of a libertine; for such I know Mark Atherton to be. Oh, I know his father will not blame me."

After this the maiden sat down again, and her thoughts turned naturally enough upon captain Lionel Walbert. He was the first man she had ever met,—or at least, that she had met since she had been old enough to study human nature—who possessed all those qualities which she thought requisite to constitute the real, true man—the man whom she could love and respect. And as she thought of him now the old fluttering came to her heart, and her bosom swelled with the new and strange emotion. She dared not attempt to analyze the feeling, and perhaps she had no desire to. At all events she had a new theme for reflection, and in her heart was laid away the germ of a new life—a germ which was to manifest itself in dreams and waking fancies, and lead her on to pure and holy aspirations.

The ship passed into the night, and the land was gone from sight. Both Esther and Mark were obliged to give up to the enervating influence of sea-sickness, and though the latter doubled and trebbled his doses of brandy and water, yet he was the sickest of the two. At the end of four days Esther was well and strong, and she thought she felt better for the short sickness she had experienced. She spent much of her time on deck now, and though the captain often spoke with her, yet it was in constrained tones as though he feared to trust himself too far beneath an influence which might only fall upon him to crush him. But he always smiled when he spoke, and the maiden returned him a grateful, meaning look.

It was on the morning of the sixth day out. Mark Atherton had become well again, and now took it upon himself to protect Esther when she was on deck; and more than once had the young captain's gaze rested upon him with a strange expression of mingled pain, indignation and contempt. The crew had just done their breakfast, and the cook had removed the dishes, when one of the men in the foretop reported a sail.

"Where away?" shouted the captain.

"About three points on the weather bow, sir," was the reply.

Walbert got his glass and hastened forward, and found that the sail could be easily seen from the deck. She was yet hull-down, but the captain could see that she carried square sails.

"She must be a small craft—a brig, most likely—bound for the States," remarked Walbert, as Mr. Atherton approached him. "But we shall soon make her out, for she is coming down fast."

The wind was now very near North-East, and the ship was heading as near East as possible with her bowlines taught. The brig—for a brig it proved to be—bore a very little East of North-East, and was coming down before the wind. In fifteen minutes more the brig's hull could be seen, and it was also seen that she had run up her studding-sails.

"By my soul," cried Walbert, with his glass to his eye, she carries guns!——And I can see her bows crowded with men!"

"How?" cried Atherton. "What is she?"

"Are your eyes good, sir?"

"Yes—as good as ever'" returned the old man.

"Then take this glass and tell me what you see."

Mr. Atherton took the instrument, and having raised it to his eye he turned it upon the coming brig. He gazed awhile, and then, as a shudder ran through his frame, he said,—

"I see port-holes in her side, and guns projecting from them. I see a dense crowd of men upon her forecastle, and they seem very eager. And they are a motley crew, too—not uniform like the crew of a lawful war-vessel."

"Aye, sir—so I saw," responded Walbert. "I think I know the fellow; and to you, sir, who may be cool, I will say—we have fallen into a bad fix. That brig is a Spanish pirate which has infested this section for over a year. He is a relentless, bloody villain, and we must——"

At this moment the brig fired one of her bow guns, and as the report came booming over the water a shudder ran around among the crew. They now knew the character of the stranger, and they knew, too, that he was a remarkable sailer—so much so that he had run away from the swiftest of the British corvettes.

"Mr. Atherton," spoke the young captain, calmly and collectively, "you must break this matter to the young lady, and place her where she will be safe. We shall have some warm work, for I mean to fight to the very last extremity. My ship shall never be given up while I live. You may help me if you will." Then Walbert turned to his men.

"Stand by!" he shouted. "We'll make a run first and then prepare for defence during the chase. Tacks and sheets. Cast off to leeward—round in on the weather braces. Up with the helm—steadily!"

In a few moments the ship was heading due South, with the wind fair upon the quarter, and the larboard studding-sails set below and aloft, and she now ploughed through the water swiftly. But the brig had changed her course, also, and was in direct chase; and it was soon evident that the latter vessel was gradually but surely gaining!

It was a thrilling moment. All knew now the character of the pursuer, and all knew that certain death must follow a capture by him. There is a strange terror in the thought of a pirate at sea, but when that thought becomes reality—when the dread demon is upon the track; and, more than all, when the fearful truth bursts forth that the blood-monster can use the greatest speed—then the heart sinks into the night of despair, and the soul turns instinctively to its God!

So felt those on board the noble ship as she vainly fled before her fell-pursuer!

TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT.

BE QUIET, DO! I'LL CALL MY MOTHER!

As I was sitting in a wood,
Under an oak tree's leafy cover,
Musing in pleasant solitude,
Who should come by but John, my lover!
He press'd my hand, and kiss'd my cheek;
Then, warmer growing, kiss'd the other,
While I exclaim'd, and strove to shriek,
"Be quiet, do! I'll call my mother!"

He saw my anger was sincere,
And lovingly began to chide me;
Then wiping from my cheek the tear,
He sat him on the grass beside me.
He feigned such pretty amorous wo,
Breathed such sweet vows one after other,
I could but smile, whispering low,
"Be quiet, do! I'll call my mother!"

He talk'd so long, and talk'd so well,
And swore he meant not to deceive me;
I felt more grief than I can tell,
When, with a sigh, he rose to leave me;
"Oh! John," said I, "and must thou go?
I love the better than all other;
There is no need to hurry so,
I never meant to call my mother!"

THE GUN-MAKER OF MOSCOW

OR,

VALDIMIR THE MONK.

A TALE OF THE EMPIRE UNDER PETER THE GREAT.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONCLUSION.

Pale as death sat the fair young Countess in her dressing-room. She did not tremble now, for every nerve had become fixed in utter despair.

"Will you not change your dress, my mistress?" asked Zenobie, in a low, tremulous tone.

"No, no," the maiden replied; and her voice sounded strangely even in her own ear, it was so low and hollow. "Why should I dress for the sacrifice? The dumb beast may suffer garlands about its neck before being led to the heathen altar; but alas! God has not given me a brute's ignorance to help me now. No, no, Zenobie, I will not dress for the bride."

"But the Duke expects it."

"I care not. He cannot ask me to do it. He may do all he wills, for I am helpless here, but he dare not ask."

"Oh! my dear mistress," cried the faithful girl, throwing her arms about the neck of her mistress, and weeping as she did so, "would to God that I could bear this for you."

"I thank you all the same, my best of friends," the Countess replied, gazing gratefully up into her attendant's face; "but it matters not much now. I shall not suffer long. My sorrow will soon cease."

Zenobie looked inquiringly up, but she did not speak.

"God will soon take me home," the wretched maiden murmured, after a pause. "I feel the chill hand upon my heart even now, and I know that earth cannot bind my spirit long with such a curse upon it!"

Zenobie had no words of consolation more to offer, so she did all she could do. She drew the head of her mistress upon her bosom, and there she held it for a long time. She held it thus until the door of the apartment was opened and a female domestic entered.

"Lady," the new-comer said, trembling perceptibly while she spoke, "the Duke bade me tell you he awaited your coming below in the hall."

She stopped here, and seemed to wait for an answer; but Rosalind did not speak.

"What answer shall I give him, lady?

At this the Countess started up, but she sank back again without speaking.

"Tell him we will come," interposed Zenobie, who saw that the announcement had taken the last power of effort from her mistress.

"Yes—yes," whispered the Countess, as the messenger hesitated and gazed inquisitively into her face.

And with this the woman left the apartment.

"My dear mistress," spoke Zenobie, now calling all her power of self-control to her aid, "all means of help and escape we have tried in vain. The time has come—"

"Oh, God have mercy!" groaned the Countess.

—"And we must meet it, since there is no further hope. It will be better to go down at once than to arouse the bad man's anger by more delay. Were there the least glimmer of hope, we would not go; but there is not. You know what I mean."

A few moments Rosalind sat like one dead. Then she started up, with her hands clasped, and raised her eyes towards heaven. She did not speak aloud, but her lips moved, and she surely uttered a prayer to God—and it was none the less eloquent because it was silent. Then she turned to her companion. Her lips were set and colorless, and a deathly look had overspread her whole face.

"Zenobie," she said, in a tone which bore no feeling more than the gliding of cold, icy sound, "I am ready. Once more, before the last joy of earth departs from me, let me bless thee, and press thee to my bosom. I am pure now!"

She opened her arms as she spoke, and when she closed them again Zenobie was within their embrace.

"Bless you—bless you ever! God keep and guide you to the end of life, and then receive you home to Himself!—Kiss me.—There—I am ready now!"

The broken-hearted girl wiped the tear from her eye, and in a moment more she was as cold and passionless as before.

"Lead on, Zenobie. I shall walk without help."

Without looking around the Moslem maiden led the way to the hall. She walked slowly, and she fancied she could hear the beating of her mistress's heart. In the hall stood the Duke with some half-dozen of his own male attendants. He took the hand of the Countess as she approached him, and gazed earnestly into her face; but he did not speak. He led her towards one of the drawing-rooms, and when they entered there they found the hump-backed priest already in waiting. Rosalind came well-nigh fainting when she saw this miserable villain ready for his work. She knew now that the priest was like the master.

"You see, my dear Countess," spoke the Duke, in a low, hypocritical tone, "that we have all prepared. I trust we shall have no trouble before this holy man."

This last sentence was spoken in a threatening tone, but it had no effect upon Rosalind. She hardly heard the words he spoke.

"Come, father," said Olga, turning now to the priest. "We are ready."

Savotano moved forward, and mumbled a Latin prayer. Then he looked upon the twain before him, and directed them to kneel.

"No! no! no!" gasped the fair Countess, trembling for the first time. "I cannot do that!"

"Kneel!" hissed the Duke, between his clenched teeth. And as he spoke he grasped the maiden more firmly by the arm and forced her down. She uttered a quick cry of pain as she felt the unmerciful gripe, but she could not resist the strong arm of her persecutor.

"Now go on!" the Duke cried, as he held the maiden down. "Go on, Savotano, and let the business be done as soon as possible."

"HOLD!"

It was a voice of thunder which spoke thus, and it came from the door. The Duke started to his feet, and he beheld Ruric Nevel, the gun-maker, approaching the spot. But the youth came not alone. Behind him came the huge bulk of Valdimir the monk. And more still—back of the monk came the widow, Claudia Nevel, and the boy Paul. And then there was, besides all this, a heavy tramp of feet in the hall, and the clang of steel.

"Hold! Stop this accursed mockery!" Ruric shouted, as he strode up the apartment.

"Miserable dog!" gasped the Duke, mad and frantic with rage, "how dare you come hither?"

"Look ye, proud Duke," the monk interposed, coming quickly forward, "I am at the bottom of all this. *I* have come to stop this foul work!'

Rosalind had started to her feet when she first heard Ruric's voice; and now, as the monk spoke, a ray of hope darted to her soul, and with a quick bound she reached her lover's side.

"Ruric! Ruric!" It was all she could say; and with a gushing, whelming flood of tears she pillowed her head upon his bosom, and his stout arms were wound fondly about her.

"Fear not," he whispered, "for, oh! Rosalind, thou art safe now."

The mad Duke saw the movement, and with a bitter curse he started towards them.

"Now by the living gods!" he shouted, with his fists clenched, and his eyes flashing fire, "you have come to your death!—What ho, there!—Without! Slaves, where are ye?"

In a moment more the side door was thrown open, and a dozen of the Duke's servants came rushing in.

"Ha!" Olga cried, "you are in time. Seize these dogs! Kill them on the spot if they offer one act of resistance. At them now! Down with the dogs!"

"HOLD!" It was Valdimir who spoke, and every arm dropped as they heard that voice. It was different from the voice they had heard the fat monk use before.

The Duke started as though a thunderbolt had burst at his feet.

"Who art thou?" he gasped, staggering further back.

"Olga—Duke of Tula—" spoke the monk, in tones which sounded strange for him, because they were so different from those he had been wont to use, "I am thy master!"

As he spoke he threw open the long black robe which enveloped his person, and cast it upon the floor at his feet, and there it lay, a huge pile of wadding and stuffing! The vast rotundity of person was gone, and the strange man now stood in his own fair form. His chin—that prominent chin—was no more hidden, and he was but a small man—not much larger than the boy Paul who stood near him. Next he placed his hand to his head and tore away the tight skull-cap, and the ring of gray hair came away with it, leaving a cluster of glossy hair floating down over the neck and shoulders!

"Great God of Mercy!" gasped Savotano, staggering back, "*it is the* EMPEROR!"

"Aye!" cried Peter, turning his darkly-flashing eye upon the staggering Duke, "I am your Emperor.——Paul, go and call the guard."

The boy hastened from the place, and when he returned he was followed by a party of the Imperial Guard.

"Mercy! mercy, sire!" gasped the Duke, sinking down on his knees.

But the Emperor answered him not. He only turned to his guard and bade them secure the Duke and the foul priest.

Rosalind Valdai gazed upon the transformed man until the strange truth worked its way to her struggling mind, and then she turned once more to Ruric. She gazed up into his face, and she saw the holy smile which rested there. The joyful truth came to her now, and with one long, low cry of frantic hope and bliss she sank upon her noble lover's bosom. She could not speak—she could only cling closely and more close to her loved protector, and with her head pillowed close by the heart that beat for her, she wept away all the grief of her opened soul.

"Olga," spoke the Emperor, after the nobleman had been firmly bound, "your race of iniquity is run."

"No, no, sire," the Duke cried, in humble, supplicating tones, "say not so. In this single thing I may have been wrong, but let my mad, consuming love be some palliation for my offence. Oh! you will not crush me with public shame for this. You will not cast from you one who loves you well."

"Oh, miserable man!" uttered Peter, with a look of utter contempt upon the base wretch, "add not perjury to your already accumulated crimes. Hark ye: Some months since I knew there was conspiracy in my capital, and I knew there was much of evil, too, which was never reported to me. I resolved to ferret it out, and to that end I meant to mingle among my people without their knowing me. So I had that robe made, and so stuffed and wadded that I could even hide my chin in the seeming fat. I assumed the garb, and my own master-at-arms did not at first know me. Once in a while I made my page assume the garb and be seen in it about the city, and thus all thought of suspecting me was cut off. I have been at the work, Olga, and I have found out all I sought. It was mere accident that first threw me in the way of this young gun-maker, and it was by accident, too, that I overheard the Count Damonoff and his companion discussing the subject of their mission to the gun-maker's shop. Of course I followed that scheme up, and I should have snatched our fair young Countess from your grasp ere this had I not been desirous of arriving at another point first. Perhaps you know that the Princess Sophia and the Minister Galitzin have planned a grand overturn of my throne.—Ah, you tremble!—And now, my noble Duke," the Emperor continued, in a deeper tone, "I have learned of your own guilt in that affair! O—you love me, do you? But I know you now. Two of your poor tools are in my hands. They are named Totma and Viska. They have made a full confession, and I now know all your villainies. I know what you have planned against this noble Countess, and against her noble lover; I know what you planned against the Count Damonoff; and I know, too, what you have planned against your Emperor.—Not a word, sir! You are the Duke of Tula no more. A more worthy man wears the ducal coronet from this hour. Ruric Nevel shall assume the station you have disgraced, and I know he will ennoble it once more."

As Peter ceased speaking he waived his hand to his officers, and they bore the prisoners from the room. The priest said not a word; but Olga cursed loudly and bitterly.

When the dark villains had gone Peter stepped forward and took Rosalind's hand. There was a tear in his bright eye, and his nether lip trembled.

"Fair cousin," he said, in a low, soft tone, "I could not promise thee that thou should'st not wed with the Duke of Tula, for I had even then planned that you should do that thing. But it will not be very hard, will it?"

The Countess gazed up, and a murmur of thanks was upon her lips; but the gushing flood started forth anew, and she could only look the joyful blessings she could not speak. Peter imprinted a kiss upon her pure brow, and then gave her hand to Ruric, and as he did so he said, with a warm smile,—

"You must be her guardian hereafter, and should you tire of the duty your Emperor will be ever ready to grant her the asylum she needs."

* * * * * * *

A week had passed away from the time of the strange scene just recorded. The former Duke, Olga, had been convicted of treason, and was now on his way to the eternal wilds of Siberia. But let me say here: He never reached the land of his banishment. His proud heart broke on the road, and he died, unknown and uncared for, in a peasant's cot among the rugged mountains of Uralia. He had begged of the officer who guided him not to tell his station, and the peasants supposed they were burying a common traveller when they laid away the mortal remains of Olga in the cold grave they had prepared.

Savotano, the hump-backed priest, was executed as a common murderer, while his companions in crime were punished as their various degrees of guilt demanded.

And now comes the closing scene.

Within the largest apartment of the ducal palace were assembled a brilliant company, and the Emperor himself was master of the ceremonies.

Ruric Nevel, the Gun-maker of Moscow, knelt at the Emperor's feet; and Peter drew his sword and laid the glittering blade upon Ruric's shoulders. And as he did so he said,—

"Arise, Sir Ruric, Duke of Tula, and receive thy just titles and bonded instruments!"

The youth arose, pale and trembling with the strange excitement of the moment, and then the Emperor handed him a broad parchment roll, with its heavy seals and vignette bearing the arms of the Dukedom.

"Now," cried Peter, whose brow was flushed with the joy he himself was making, "let the rest of the work go on. Come, holy father, we need your help to perform the rest of the ceremony."

Ruric was pale no longer. As he felt the warm hand of Rosalind trembling within his own the rich blood mounted to his brow and temples, and in his dark eyes the strange love-light danced like reflected sunbeams.

The word was spoken—the bond of union was made—and, after all, Rosalind Valdai had become Duchess of Tula. The widowed mother was the first to bless them—and the Emperor came next. Then came Paul and Zenobie, hand in hand.

"Aha," spoke the happy Duchess, as she caught the new light of Zenobie's eye, and then turned to the glowing face of Paul, "you are playing at the game of Love."

"You will not object," whispered the fair girl, hiding her face upon the bosom of her mistress.

"No, no, Zenobie."

"And you, my master," spoke Paul, gazing eagerly into Ruric's face,—"you will not say nay."

"No, no, my noble Paul. If you can win her you have my consent."

But she was won already.

But there was yet one more to come. Conrad Count Damonoff, somewhat pale and weak, but yet on the sure road to health, moved slowly forward and took the hand of the joyous bride. Then he reached forth the other hand and took the palm of Ruric, and as he thus held both their hands he said,—

"My lord and lady—and, I must say, my best of friend,—let this moment atone for all of darkness between us in the past. Be you happy both—and may God bless you. Let me be accounted among your friends; and let the future prove how grateful I can be."

"Aye," cried Ruric, grasping the Count's hand more firmly, "let the future show how grateful we can all be for the blessings of this hour; and while we look to God for help we will not fail to remember in our prayers the author of our joys—our noble Emperor—Peter of Russia!"

And so closed the scene as it should—with one long, loud shout of—

"God bless our Emperor!"

Peter never forgot that moment. In the long years thereafter, when he sometimes let the clouds of passion settle upon his soul, he remembered that scene, and that shout. It was one of the bright spots in the memory of his youth which he cherished always.

[THE END.]

INTRODUCTIONS.

ANNAPOLIS, (Md.) May 12, 1856.

MR. LEDGER:—If a gentleman asks an introduction to a beautiful young lady, and she is not inclined to it, or flatly refuses it, must he consider it in the light of an insult or not? A SUBSCRIBER.

A lady, whether old or young, handsome or homely, rich or poor, has an "inalienable right" to decline an introduction to any one that requests such a favor; and a gentleman has the same right, also. The fact that a person declines acceding to a request for an introduction, cannot be considered as an insult, any more than can a refusal to grant a request for a loan be so considered. The *manner* of such a refusal may, however, be so rude and ungracious as to give just cause for offence.

A TENDER-HEARTED LADY.—A most excellent lady, who used to live in New York, was so full of sympathy for ill-treated animals, that, whenever she saw an omnibus driver, or anybody else, beating a horse in the street, she would at once commence a course of vehement expostulation. As the lady always dresssed richly, the sight of her, preaching to a rough and angry man, was certain to attract a crowd, and she at last became somewhat famous and received much credit, as a lady of uncommon sympathy. Some one was expatiating on these excellent qualities one day to a company, when a gentleman started up and said, "Yes, she has an immense deal of out-door sympathy for animals, so much so that she has none left for her family; *and her husband and children have often mourned to think they are not ill-used omnibus horses!"*

The lady's admirers were silent.

DELICACY, RESPECT, AND FRIENDSHIP.

It is absurd to imagine that "true love has run its course, and become extinct." Human nature is the same in all ages, and, as regards the sexual passion, under all circumstances. The savage loves the mate allotted to him by his Maker as sincerely as the civilised man does his, but the affection of the former is of a coarser character. As the human race becomes more improved, the love of man for woman assumes a purity and a fervor which seeks to invest the latter with attributes which silly, vulgar people have the audacious folly to attempt to deny her. The more a man respects a woman, the better he will love her; and when we perceive growing around us in society, from the highest to the lowest class, a deep-rooted appreciation of woman's mental and moral worth, it shows very clearly that love is becoming stronger, more pure, more exalted; and that men in estimating the value of woman, do not always associate her with any of that gross and selfish gratification which would tend to debase and depress her. We firmly believe that woman is better and more truly loved now than at any other period. It is true that in the days of chivalry she was regarded with a wild worship; but the hearts that beat for her now are as warm and as impetuous as those of our knightly ancesters, the only difference is in the manner in which the love of the present day is displayed. Jousts and tourneys have gone out of fashion, but manliness and beauty remain; and the hearths of America with all their modern appearances, are guardianed by a holy and fervent love, which seeks in the bosom of domestic felicity for that enjoyment which gives man a foretaste of the great one that is to come, and lifts him nearer to that state of moral perfection for which nature has so befitted him. Love is immortal, as Campbell nobly wrote:

"Cold in the dust this perished heart may lie.
But that which warm'd it once shall never die."

And to the truth of the doctrine every man of sense and feeling will cheerfully assent. Those who affect to doubt on this subject are insincere, not only to others but themselves, for it is scarcely possible for a man to have arrived at the years of maturity, without his heart, at some time or another, having glowed for some fair girl, and we never listen to this class contemptible twaddlers without feeling disgusted, and almost ashamed that we belong to the same sex. These grumblers are a class of selfish egotists, and no woman of spirit or independence should submit to their impertinence. A man in the full signification of the word admits with the great bard that—

"Greatness of mind, and nobleness, their seat
In her build loveliest,"

and accords to woman a warm affection based on respect, delicacy, and that true friendship which defies the storms and struggles of life, and gladly submits to the greatest sacrfiices.

SENECA FALLS, May 20, 1856.

MR. LEDGER:—Is it becoming in a young lady, under any circumstances, to make use of slang phrases, such as "go to thunder," "all in my eye," "no you don't," "some pumpkins," &c. I have heard young ladies in our vicinity use these phrases very frequently, and was struck with the impropriety, as I considered it; but one of my friends maintains that such expressions are simple, natural, and harmless? Is he correct? M. Y.

Next to profanity, rum and tobacco, nothing so ill-becomes the mouth of a woman as *slang*. In man it is abominable; in woman it is disgusting. It always indicates vulgarity of taste and barrenness of mental resources. People should not be misled to indulge in the use of slang, because they see it in print; for, if they will take the trouble to ascertain the character of the papers and books in which it is used—unless for purposes of illustration—they will discover that they are of little worth, and the organs of those who delight and traffic in vulgarity and obscenity.

MIX WITH THE PEOPLE.

"I will tell you," said my father, "the secret of leisure is occupation. Have eight hours a day entirely devoted to business, and you will then find you have time for other pursuits; this, for some time to come, will seem to you a paradox, but you will one day be convinced of the truth of what I tell you, that the man who is the most engaged has always the most leisure. And remember, it is only Brahmins and Rajahs who think they must move with head, erect and uplifted gaze in order to govern men. To be a man above the world, you must in every signification of the word, begin by being a man of the world; to have weight and influence with the people, you must understand them; to understand them, you must mix with them; we hear so much of dignity in history, that the individual traits of character are lost sight of. A perfect simplicity is often the greatest refinement of diplomacy. All youth is arrogant, but arrogant above all youth is political or diplomatic youth."—*Lucille Belmont.*

BERENICE, is the title of a new book that we have received from Philips, Sampson & Co. It is from the pen of the authoress of NORMA DANTON, and is decidedly one of the most powerfully written works that has emanated from the American press. It cannot but meet with an extensive sale.

OUR PASSIONS.—Our passions and appetites are the life and sense of the soul, without which it would be dead and stupid, without any principle of vital sensation. For what is life without fear, and love, and hope, and desire, and such like passions, whereby we feel all things else, and feel ourselves?

BUSINESS is like fishing; if you wish to succeed, you must anchor once in a while. To be constantly changing is to be yourself out of change for all eternity. Men that are always stirring must be spoons.

FRESH FERN LEAVES.

Entered according to Act of Congres, in the year 1855, by R. Bonner, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of New York.

PEEPS FROM UNDER A PARASOL.—NO. 4.

I was sauntering along one sunny day last week, when I saw before me a young girl, hooped, flounced, fringed, laced, bugled and ribboned, regardless of cost. Her mantilla, whether of the "Eugenie" or "Victoria" pattern I am too ignorant to inform you, was of black, and had more trimming than I could have believed the most ingenious of dressmakers could pile on *one* mantilla, though backed by every dry goods merchant in New York. Venus! what a figure it was hung on! Short, flat-chested, narrow-shouldered, angular and stick-like! Her bonnet was a marvel of Lilliputianism, lightness and lilacs.—Raphael! what a face was under it! Watery, yellow, black eyes, a sallow, unwholesome skin, and—Barpolph! what a nose! Imagine a spotted "Seckle pear"—imagine a gnarled bulb-root—imagine a vanquished prize-fighter's proboscis, and you have it! That such a female, with such repulsive features, living in a Christian country, where there were looking-glasses, should strain back from the roots what little hair she had, as if her face were beautiful in its outline—it was incredible.

Who, or what, was she? One of those poor, bedizened unfortunates who hang out signal "Barkis" flags? The poor thing had no capital, even for that miserable market; nobody would have bid for her, but a pawn-broker.

While I speculated and wondered, she slowly lifted her kidded forefinger. I was all eyes and ears! A footman in livery sprang forward, and obsequiously let down the steps of a superb carriage, in waiting, on whose panels was emblazoned a coat-of-arms. The bundle of millinery—the stick-like figure inside the hoops—the gay little bonnet, and the Bardolphian nose, took possession of it. The liveried footman mounted behind, the liveried coachman cracked his whip on the box, the sleek, shiny horses arched their necks, the silver-mounted harness glistened in the sunlight, andthe vision was gone. F-a-n-n-y F-e-r-n! is there no limit to your ignorance? You had been commiserating—actually *commiserating* one of the *elite* of New York!

All-compensating Nature! tossing money bags to twisted features, and divorcing beauty from brains; unfortunate they, whom in thy hurry thou hast overlooked, bestowing neither beauty, brains nor money!

That was not all I saw from under my parasol, on that sunny morning. I saw a young girl—bonnetless, shawlless—beautiful as God often makes the poor—struggling in the grasp of two sturdy policemen. Tears streamed from her eyes, while with clasped hands, as she shrank away from their rough gripe, she plead for release. What was her sin I know not. It might have been the first downward step in a life of unfriended and terrible temptation; for the agony in that young face could not have been feigned; or—she might have been seized only on suspicion; but in vain she begged, and prayed, and wept. Boys shouted; men, whose souls were leprous with sin, jeered; and heartless, scornful women "passed by on the other side."

The poor young creature, (none the less to be pitied, *had* she sinned,) goaded to madness by the gathering crowd, seized her long trailing tresses, and tossing them up like a veil over her shame-flushed and beautiful face, resigned herself to her fate.

Many will think any expression of sympathy for this poor unfortunate, uncalled for. There are enough to defend that side of the question, and to them I willingly leave it; there are others, who, with myself, could wish that young girls thus (it may be *innocently*) accused, should not, before trial, be dragged roughly through the public streets, like shameless, hardened offenders. There are those, who, like myself, as they look upon the faces of their own fair young daughters, and think of the long life of happiness or misery before them, will wish that the sword of the law might be tempered with more mercy.

The two scenes above recorded, are not *all* that I saw from under my parasol, on that sunny morning. I passed the great bow-windows of the St. Nicholas—those favorite lounging places for male guests, and other gentlemen, well pleased to criticise lady pedestrians, who, thanks to the inventor of parasols, can dodge their battery of glances at will.

Not so, the gentlemen; who, weary with travel and sight-seeing, unthinkingly fall asleep in those luxurious arm-chairs, in full view of the public, with their heels on the window sill, their heads hanging on one side, and their wide-open mouths so suggestive of the —— *snore*—that I fancy I hear. Heaven forgive these comical-looking sleepers the cachinnatory sideaches they have often given me!

Was there *ever* anything uglier than a man asleep? Single women, who have travelled in railroad cars, need not be too modest to answer!

Fanny Fern.

* * *

Folly.—For a girl to expect to be happy without marriage. If you would take a peep at sunshine, look in the face of a young mother.

A SENSIBLE MOTHER.

A lady living up town, who had an ill-mannered son, some sixteen years of age, who thought it manly to smoke, drink, swear, and act rudely to his superiors in age and wisdom, a short time since heard, with much pain, that Richard (for that was her son's name) had used rude language to a very intimate lady friend. She visited her son the next morning before he left his room, and spoke to him about the matter. He at once admitted the truth of the charge; whereupon, his mother told him he must apologize for his rudeness. This Richard flatly refused to do, saying that the lady whom he had insulted had a husband to protect her, and he (Richard) was ready to give him (the husband) such satisfaction as one *gentleman* might demand of another! The mother contemplated her boy with astonishment and sorrow, but was firm in her demand that he should apologize for his rudeness. He as persistently refused to obey. Finding persuasion, commands, and reason, alike thrown away upon him, she stepped into the hall, locked his door, and told him he should not leave his room, or have anything to eat or drink, until he would obey her, and apologize to the lady whom he had insulted. He took the matter very coolly, and said he would sooner starve than do what she commanded.

At dinner time, Richard's mother, who loved him dearly, notwithstanding his unworthiness, knocked at his door and asked if he was ready to obey her, to which he gruffly answered no. At tea-time, the same inquiry was made, and the same reply given. The next morning, his mother, (whose course had received the approbation of her husband,) again knocked at the door and asked Richard if he would obey her. He had begun to waver, but still held out, in hopes that her maternal fears would overcome her sense of right; for, that she *was right*, his conscience and reason both told him. At dinner-time, she again made the same inquiry, and again he bade her defiance. At night he said he was very hungry, but that he would not obey her.

"Very well, Richard," said she, sobbing bitterly, "you must take your own course; but if you think to practise on my weakness, you will make a fatal mistake. I would keep you here till the foundations of the house mouldered, sooner than suffer such insolence to triumph."

When Richard heard this declaration, accompanied by sobs, he felt that he must yield or perish, and he yielded. Filled with admiration for his mother's justice and firmness, he threw his arms around her neck, begged her forgiveness, and vowed that he would thenceforth try to be worthy of her. The next day he called on the lady whom he had insulted, made a proper apology, and was, of course, readily forgiven; and since that day, he has been as noted for attention to his studies, and general good behavior, as he before was for idleness and folly. Had his mother been less firm and just, when her authority was set at defiance, her son's race of dissipation would undoubtedly have soon been run; whereas, she now sees him entering upon a career which will lead to honor and usefulness, as surely as water finds its level.

CURRENT ITEMS.

As a groom was riding a fine horse along the upper part of Fifth Avenue a few days since, a ferocious bull-dog leaped from a butcher's cart that was passing, and seized the horse by the left side of the chest, just above the fore leg. The horse reared and plunged but the dog held to his gripe, and the blood flowed freely. At last the horse seized the dog by the back with his teeth, with one craunch broke his backbone, and dropped him helpless on the pavement.

As the Hon. Charles Sumner, U. S. Senator from Massachusetts, was writing recently at his desk in the Senate Chamber, the Hon. Preston S. Brooks of South Carolina struck him over the head with a heavy cane, and then continued to beat him until the cane was broken in small pieces. Mr. Sumner was taken up insensible and covered with blood, and conveyed to his lodgings. Although dangerously injured he is in a fair way for recovery. The reason of the attack was some remarks made by Mr. Sumner in the Senate.

A rogue visited a spiritual mesmerizing circle in Williamsburgh a few evenings since, and while in a (pretended) mesmeric sleep, into which one of the "professors" had thrown him, he managed to pick the pockets of everybody present, (taking money, watches, handkerchiefs, and everything else moveable,) and escaped with his booty. The "circle" could get no satisfactory information as to the rascal's movements, from their departed friends.

An old crone was arrested not long since in Brooklyn for "getting up" an infant for begging purposes, by binding one of its legs to its side in such a manner as to make it seem as though the leg was entirely gone. The poor thing cried constantly, and when the bandages were removed, the leg was completely benumbed, and would probably have soon mortified. The woman was sent to prison for three months.

The members of the Bonaparte family in Paris are becoming exceedingly furious at the Emperor, because it is said he has determined to name the Count de Morny, (an illegitimate son of Napoleon's mother (a "Prince of the Blood," and thus give him a chance to the heirship of the throne of France. Nice, moral people, these European monarchs.

A little girl living in Washington street in this city, a few days since was attacked in the street by a ferocious dog, and mangled in a most shocking manner. The shrieks of the poor little sufferer were heard by her mother, who flew to the rescue of her child as speedily as possible, and passers-by also hastened to her aid. The child will probably die.

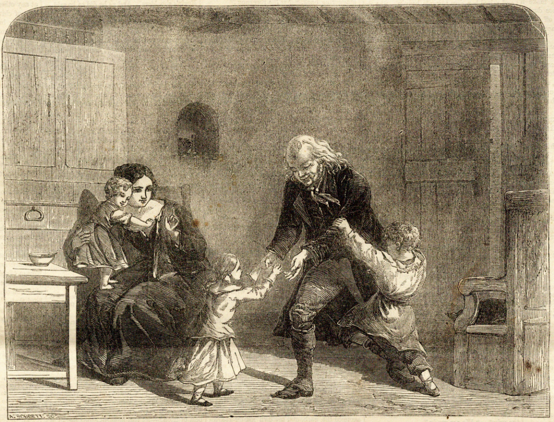
Since its organization, in 1816, the American Bible Society has issued the enormous number of 10,653,647, copies of the bible. Supposing these to average a uniform thickness of two inches each, they would make, if piled one on the other, a biblical monument *over three hundred and thirty eight miles high!*

The London Times states that, in the late war, England lost 22,457 men, France, 60,000, Russia, 500,000 and Turkey and Sardinia, 40,000. And what have any of these countries gained?

A young Kentuckian, on going to visit his sweetheart, found a "hated rival" present and apparently in favor. Greatly exasperated, the young swain went to the barn and revenged himself by cutting off the ears of his rival's horse.

Eight human skeletons were recently found in digging a cellar in Burlington, Iowa, every one of which was over eight feet long. "There were giants in those days."

A gentleman in this city has offered to bet five thousand dollars, that the next President of the United States will be a man who, up to the time of his nomination, had never been heard of, out of his own State. Who is to be the great unknown?


A. BOBBETT. SC.

GRANDFATHER'S VISIT.

MR. COBB'S NEW STORY.

We this week commence the publication of "THE STORM SECRET: A Story of Ship and Shore," by Sylvanus Cobb, Jr. Mr. Cobb's reputation is so well known, and he is so thoroughly *believed in* by the American people, that any general commendation of his authorship would be superfluous. It may, however, put a keener edge upon the zest with which his admirers will read The Storm Secret, if we inform them (confidentially) that it is far superior to anything which he has heretofore written, and that, splendidly as it opens, the narrative increases in interest from the commencement to the close, and carries the reader's heart along with it as resistlessly as the "Storm Demon" drove the good ship "Red Lion" before his breath. Persons who wish to possess this "Story of Ship and Shore" entire, will have to preserve their files of the Ledger, as it will not be published in book-form.

* * *

DIPLOMACY.

Mr. Buchanan wrote to Lord Clarendon, "I will have much satisfaction (?) in transmitting your Lordship's note to Mr. Marcy." Thereupon Lord Palmerston says to the British House of Commons, "Mr. Buchanan is satisfied with his Lordship's note and the United States Government will entertain a similar feeling (?) in regard to it." And thereupon Lord Clarendon comes round with a tremendous "because" which sweeps both the previous statements into the same muddle; for he speaks in this wise, "both come to the same meaning, because he could not have felt much satisfaction in transmitting a copy of that note, if that note had not appeared to him to be so (?) considered by his Government also." At this point the three gentlemen ceased to "argufy the topic," and "have the honor to be, with the highest consideration, yours, Sir." Among them the "Queen's English" is nowhere, and common sense—but that went long ago with honesty and plain-dealing "to the dogs."—Diplomacy and their Lordships never meddle with the lower animals.

* * *

"B—— S——."—You ask for an opinion on a certain libel suit. We have nothing to say in the matter, any farther than this, that if the plaintiff could produce certain letters in Court which *we* have seen and read, he would beyond a doubt obtain a favorable verdict from an intelligent jury, as the letters in question show the character of the defendant.

* * *

A Sailor's Idea of the Law.—An old tar, having been cheated by a landsman, was advised to sue him. "No—no," he replied, "for a sailor to go to law with a landlubber would be like a saint's bringing an action in Tophet, with little devils for jurors and Satan himself for the judge."

SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENTS.

Within the past year the canine race seem to have been inoculated with the spirit of brutality which is so rampant in Washington, and like their Representatives in Congress, are attacking, mangling, and killing, just as their debased instincts happen for the moment to dictate. Every few days we are thrilled with horror by an account of some child's having been "dreadfully mangled by a ferocious dog." Now, it is "a bright intelligent boy of seven years;" then, "a beautiful little girl, only five years old;" and so on, through all the stages of chilhood.

Is there no means of preventing such horrid casualties? What is done to the *owners* of these ferocious dogs? Are they ever fined or imprisoned by the courts, or shot by the bereaved parents of their dogs' victims? A man who will let a "ferocious dog" run at large, ought at least to be held responsible for the animal's acts; and when the *law* refuses to give satisfaction to a parent whose child has been thus torn in pieces, the community would be apt to regard with leniency any means of redress which the afflicted survivors should seek. Therefore, let the owners of "ferocious dogs" keep them where they can injure no one, or else be prepared to take the consequences.

* * *

A "Caution" to Some People.—The Ledger still continues to go up "like a rocket." It is a "caution" to some folks. Where it will stop it is difficult to determine, as everybody likes it, praises it, and recommends it to others, as the great family weekly of the day. There is one thing that we regret, and only one thing, in connection with *our* "immense success," namely: as our circulation goes up that of one of the Boston weeklies goes down. That paper unfortunately, and much to our sorrow, is playing the part of "the stick." If any of our readers are desirous of knowing its name, they can ascertain it by inquiring at any news office for *the paper that is running down the fastest.* We do not like to injure a friendly concern by mentioning its name in print. By the way, whenever you hear an editor boasting of his circulation, and of having "no fear" of losing a part of it, just drop into the news depots, and there you can ascertain for yourself the true state of the case. The newsmen, of course, are no more interested in one paper than another, and will tell you *the truth.*

* * *

To a Lowell Correspondent.—The paper that you speak of is heavily mortgaged. The proprietor, however, is not to blame for that, as he had not the means to purchase it out and out. Whether he will succeed, and ultimately pay for it, or whether it will revert to its original proprietor, time only can decide. He certainly has a very heavy load on his shoulders.

"SPREAD YOURSELF."

Rev. Dr. Woods, of Newton, Miss., at the late meeting of the (New School) General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, held in New York, told the following story:—"The people of New York City may perhaps suppose that clergymen from a distance who attempt to make speeches in the metropolis have taken the advice of a certain lady who was emigrating to Indiana. In order that she might be provided for the exigencies of the times, she carried with her two hens and two dozens of eggs. By the way one of the hens died, and when the lady got to her destination she put the twenty-four eggs in one nest, and set the hen upon them. After a while she went back to see how things were going on, and found that the hen had contracted herself and did not cover more than half the eggs, whereupon the good lady says, 'Mrs. hen, you have got to a new country, and if you are going to do anything here you must *spread yourself!*'"

We think it requires something better than a "Mrs. hen to do anything" in New York. Nothing less than a very large rooster, an old goose or an overgrown shanghai can make "a spread" that will astonish the natives of the unparalleled city of Gotham.

* * *

Typographical Blunders.—The Tribune lately appeared in new type, on which occasion it presented a really handsome appearance. Sylvanus Cobb, Jr., the distinguished author, happened to meet Mr. Greeley, and, being an old practical printer himself, he congratulated him on his fine, clean-looking sheet. The next day one of the reporters made an item of the compliment thus bestowed upon the *Tribune* by the famous novelist; but you may imagine what was Mr. Greeley's astonishment on reading the paragraph, to find that the printers had made Mr. Cobb congratulate him on having—not a fine, clean-looking *sheet*, but a fine, clean-looking *shirt!*

* * *

A Hard-Headed Fish.—The Captain of the whale ship, Dolphin, reports that one of his boats, while chasing a whale in the northern Pacific, came in contact with the head of some marine monster, which was so hard that it stove in the boat's bottom. It took considerable bailing and scrambling to save the lives of the sailors, one of whom swore it was time to quit the profession when *rocks began to float around like corks!*

* * *

Why was Abel's fractured skull like a Southern swamp? Because it was a cane brake (Cain break).

WIT AND HUMOR.

Boyish.—A boy in the country writes to another in the city to come and visit him. He proposes to him to get his father's consent, and says it might be done in this way: "Ask your sister to ask your mother to ask your father to let you come."

California Doctors.—A friend in speaking of California, says: "If you call a physician, he generally relieves you, if not of the disease, of your pocket-book. For three 'ahems' and a 'ha' I paid, in August last, twenty-seven dollars."

A horse-dealer had a son, who, being a lad of spirit, proposed as a novel expedient, to open a stable on strictly *honest dealing;* but the father, who was a prudent man, discouraged the idea, observing that "he disliked *speculation.*"

There is a schoolmaster up town who has an easy way of teaching children to read. He tells them to skip all the long-jaw-cracking words, as they are only names of foreign countries, which they will never visit.

"Hollo! I say, what did you say your medicine would cure?" "Oh! it'll cure everything—heal anything!" "Ah! well, I'll take a bottle; maybe it'll heel my boots—they need it bad enough!"

The Bachelor's Difficulty.—"You have only yourself to please," said a married friend to an old bachelor. "True," replied he, "but you cannot tell what a difficult task I find it."

Why would ladies of a certain (uncertain) age, make the best commercial agents? Because they take a lively interest in maritime (marry time) affairs.

A man who'd fear God and sleep well, should have as little to do with politics as possible. Remember this, and stay at home with your wife.

Why are kisses like the creation? Because they are made out of nothing, and all very good.

* * *

Our Only Terms.—Single copy, $2 per annum; two copies, $3; four copies, $6; eight copies, $12. Postmasters and others who get up clubs can afterwards add single copies at $1,50. The party who sends us $12 for a club of eight copies (all to be sent at one time,) will be entitled to a copy *free.* It will be useless for parties to write us insisting on our taking large clubs at lower rates. An elegant family weekly, like the Ledger, (containing no advertisements,) cannot be afforded at less than these terms. We do not want any clubs formed in towns where there are news offices established.

SUNSHINE.

BY WILLIAM RODERICK LAWRENCE.

How beautiful the rays
Of summer sunshine fall
On hill, and vale, and cast
A golden hue o'er all.

The silver stream floats by
With golden jewels deck'd;
The green leaves softly sigh,
With lights and shadows fleckt.

The velvet mead and lawn,
The moss beside the stream,
Are bathed in radiant glow
As in a fairy dream.

'Tis luxury to breathe
The mellow, golden air;
'Tis happiness to gaze
On all so bright and fair.

Yes! sunlight joy imparts,
And every heart doth feel
Its gentle influence warm
Through each pulsation steal.

It gilds the vault above,
It gilds the earth beneath,
And with its warmth and joy
Our transient lives doth wreathe.

Then bless the sunshine fair
That cheers us on our way,
Till we shall reach that clime
Where it is endless day.

HARTFORD, Conn.

ASTREA CARLISLE.

BY MARY W. STANLEY GIBSON.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1856, by ROBERT BONNER, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of New York.

CHAPTER III.

THE JOURNEY.

Some five months afterward, Kate Stanton was suddenly summoned from school to attend her guardian in a Southern tour, and Anna and her humble friend breathed freer when she was gone. Although her threats had never been repeated, there was something in her air that showed they were not quite forgotten, and they felt, instinctively, that her keen eyes would soon have detected the secret they could no longer hide. With her away, they were comparatively safe, and in three weeks from the time of her departure, they had left Tenton, ostensibly for a visit to some of Anna's relatives, but in reality for a distant city where the expected event could take place with the greatest security.

In spite of the privacy she had been obliged to observe, in consequence of her one false step, Anna was a happy wife, and hoped to be a happy mother. She looked forward to the days when all should be forgotten and forgiven by her parents, and she and hers safely sheltered in the old home she loved so well. She pictured her husband strolling over the well kept place, arm-in-arm with her white haired father—she saw her mother and Nancy Grey stand smiling in the great hall door—while she and her infant son were playing like two children on the grass of the mimic terrace just below. For Anna was but a child herself in years and at heart,—and dreamed more of matching her baby's blue eyes with spring violets, or of wreathing his sunny curls with flowers, and holding him up for her happy father to kiss—than of instilling those early lessons of goodness and truth into the innocent heart, that were to fit it for the battle of life—that battle upon which so many enter with brave and bounding spirits, and from which none ever come out unscathed. With such thoughts she beguiled the long and tedious day's journey in the cars. It was night when they reached the last station, and when the cars moved off, and she found herself so near her destination, she grew nervous, and clung to Nancy Grey, like a lost child. The city, to her untutored soul, seemed like the pit of destruction, and the prospect of being turned adrift, as it were, in its crowded streets, filled her with terror and dismay.

"Oh if Julian had only come with us," she murmured, as the engine gave one unearthly shriek, before thundering in under the arch of the depot. "We shall get lost or carried away, certainly Nancy. What shall we do? I wish we had never come."

"It is too late to wish now," said Nancy cheerfully, though if the truth must be told, her own heart sank heavily within her, as she looked out from the window, and saw the throng of passengers, hackmen, and omnibus drivers upon the platform, all vociferating at the top of their voices, and ready to seize upon her as soon as she stepped out of the door. "We are here now, and must do the best we can. Don't tremble so, Anna. You have grown childish lately—but I won't scold you for that, my little pet. Let me wrap this cloak round you, and then do you sit here while I go out and get a carriage. That noisy crowd would only make you worse."

"But you will come back—you will come back Nancy!" said the poor girl in a strange kind of way. "Don't leave me here alone. Oh I wish Julian had come!"

"We will send for him—only be quiet," said Nancy, a little frightened at the feverish eagerness of her manner. "Let me go for the carriage now, so we may find our new home as soon as possible, you will feel better after a good sleep, and to-morrow we shall both think New York a finer place than ever."

She waited a few moments for the bustle to subside, and then stepped out upon the platform. It was almost deserted, but by one of the great doors a hack was standing, while its driver was deep in conversation with a slender youth, wrapped in the ample folds of a splendid cloak, with a slouched hat drawn closely over his brow. He walked away as she approached him—his companion turned, touched his hat and said briefly,—

"Have a carriage Miss?"

"Yes—my baggage is yonder." She led him to the place, and while he was fastening the trunks upon the rack, went after Anna. She wrapped the cloak more closely around her—sustained her trembling steps till they reached the carriage, and placed her comfortably on the soft cushions. The driver stood with the door half open as she took her seat—and asked,—

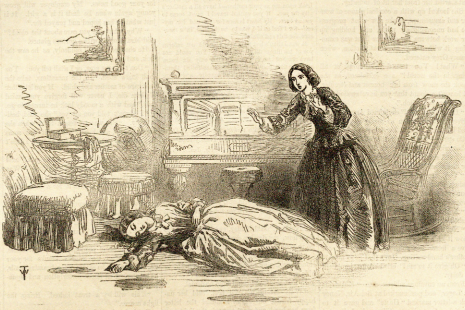
"Where to Miss?"

Then it flashed upon her their destination was utterly unknown to her. She leaned out and scanned the man's face by the light of the dying lamp above the door. He looked honest in her eyes, and determined to trust him, she said frankly,—

"Not to any hotel, for my companion is not well. But if you know any respectable place—respectable and private—where she will not be annoyed by noise and bustle—take us there."

"Yes Miss," and bowing low to conceal the grimace he could not help making at her verdancy, he closed the door and mounted the box. The cloaked figure sprang up beside him, and they rolled swiftly away, while Anna, relieved of all anxiety, at a moment when she should have been most anxious—crept up to Nancy, and laying her head on her shoulder, fell asleep.

The motion of the carriage first roused her, after a slumber of half an hour's duration. They had halted before a large wooden gate between two brick houses. The coachman got down and opened it—he opened the door also and helped them out, while his companion remained upon the box and held the reins.



THE FATAL LETTER.

"Which house is it?" asked Nancy, looking up at the closed blinds on either side.

"Neither of these, Miss," replied the man with a respectful bow. "I will show you the way, if you please," and leading them through the gate he passed up a kind of plank sidewalk kept free from snow or ice, and knocked at the door of a large wooden house which had once been cream-colored, but which was now brown and mossy with age. The wide old-fashioned porch had seats on each side—the knocker was a brazen lion's head, with a ring in his mouth; and the small enclosure in front was evidently a flower garden, and bright and blooming in the summer time. Anna liked the quaint, half-gay half-gloomy air of the place and shaking off her fears and doubts waited with great curiosity for the first appearance of their future hostess.

She came, after a second and more vigorous summons with the knocker; and shielding her lamp carefully from the draught of air, she opened the door.

"Who is it, at this time of night?" she asked sharply.

"Some ladies, who would like to stay with you for a short time," said the driver, pointing to his companions.

"Can't take them," was the brief answer. "My upper rooms have been engaged this week past, and I'm expecting the lodgers every day.

The man's face cleared up suddenly.

"Let me speak one word with you," he said, in an under tone, and stepped into the hall after her, with an apology to Anna for keeping her waiting.

"Did Mr. Alford engage these rooms?" he asked.

"Yes—for a young lady and her servant."

"Good. They are in the porch now—and Mr. Alford is on the box of the carriage outside the gate. It is all right. Just show the ladies in while I get the baggage."

He bustled out, while the lady came forward, with many apologies, and ushered them through a long dark hall, with an old staircase of fabulous size, into a small sitting room, whose deep window seats, old fashioned mahogany furniture and glowing fire impressed Anna with a vivid sense of security and comfort. Her hostess helped her off with her things, and drawing a great easy chair before the grate for her use, ensconced herself in the depths of another, and looked steadily at the fire. Anna took the opportunity, while Nancy was superintending the removal of the baggage in the hall, of studying the face and form of her hostess.

She was a woman of the medium height, well dressed and easy manners and movements—but plain, and marked with the small pox. She wore a black dress, and her iron gray hair was parted simply beneath a widow's cap. Her face was somewhat harshly featured and stern in expression—her mouth shut firmly and her eyes were dark and piercing. So Anna found, when they were suddenly raised and fixed upon herself, when Nancy entered and the carriage drove away.

The poor child colored beneath that earnest gaze—and was glad when the ordeal was passed, and the lady asked,—

"Have you travelled far to-day, Miss ——" She paused and hesitated as if uncertain what to call her.

"*Mrs.* Ellingwood," said Nancy Grey very gravely, and Anna started and turned red and pale again at hearing the name.

Their hostess raised her eyebrows in mute astonishment.

"Indeed! Pardon me, *Madam.* I did not know you were a married lady, when—" she stopped short and coughed.

"I am married," faltered Anna. "I have been married nearly a year."

"You surprise me. You seem so young. And your friend here—what may I call her?"

"Miss Grey," was the reply of the person designated.

"Thank you. My name is Mrs. Morley. And now that we know each other, let me do the honors of your new home. You must be tired and I have ordered a fire in the upper rooms. Supper will also be served in the course of half an hour. I suppose you wish to take your meals in your own apartments?"

"Nancy bowed.

"They will be served there regularly at any hours you may appoint. I have only one servant, but as she has no one but myself to take care of, she can easily attend to you. And now ladies, if you will be kind enough to follow me, I will show you to your rooms. They are old, and furnished in old style, like this you see below—but I think you will find them comfortable and pleasant. Mind the step, Mrs. Ellingwood. This way, if you please, Miss Grey."

She led the way, bearing a wax candle in each hand, up the wide staircase and through an upper hall, with low arched doors on each side. At the last but one, she stopped, and said to Nancy,—

"I have given you the rooms at the back of the house, as the driver said you wished for a quiet place. Be kind enough to ring when you wish for supper, or if you need anything else. Good night ladies. I wish you a pleasant sleep beneath my roof."

She gave the lights to Nancy—waved her hand with a courteous air and went down the stairs.

"Now for a sleep at our new home," said Anna eagerly as she turned the key and flung the door wide open. She gave a little scream of surprise and pleasure, and danced, laughingly, across the room. It was indeed a pleasant place.

The three windows were shaded by crimson curtains that fell to the floor—a bright fire blazed and sparkled in the grate, and two easy chairs flanked a supper table set for two, in front of it—a few old portraits hung upon the wall—a dark, rich-colored carpet covered the floor—a carved bookcase—a claw-footed mahogany table—a full-length mirror with its gilding tarnished and defaced, and a few clumsy mahogany chairs completed the furniture of the room. A door at the left hand opened into their sleeping room—containing one large and and one small bed—a toilet table and all its necessary conveniences—a fireplace, and a luxuriously easy lounge. True, the carved cornices in each side room were mouldering away—the plastering was cracked and discolored, and the paper soiled and tattered here and there—but enough of comfort remained to compensate for these deficiencies—and Anna was romantic enough to like age and oddity and dilapidation—at least, in a house or room.

She fluttered around like a bird, and had to be coaxed and talked to, and even scolded a little, before she would settle down quietly in all the dignity of her new position. It seemed so strange to be relieved from the irksome tasks of Bel Air House and the jealous guardianship of Miss Griffin, and installed as the mistress of this easy little nook, that she could hardly understand the change. A sudden thought came to sober her in the midst of this gayety. It was of Julian. They two could be so happy in that quiet and pleasant place—yet he was far away—lonely perhaps, and sad in thinking of his little darling, while she was almost forgetting him in the novelty of everything around her. She was quiet enough when this memory came over her, and sat curled up in her arm chair, watching Nancy wistfully as she moved about the room, putting their travelling equipments away.

When everything was in its place she leaned over Anna's chair, and said playfully,—

"Well, what is it? I see a question in your eyes. Are you growing homesick already."

"No—but tell me what you think of the lady down stairs—Mrs. Morley."

"I don't like her," said Nancy, promptly. And then, as if correcting her speech, she added—

"That is, I am not in love with her, at all. But I may be wrong in disliking her. She may be a very good woman—I dare say she is."

"Why did you call me Mrs. Ellingwood?" said Anna, looking down into the fire, and coloring as she spoke the name.

"How can you ask?" was the surprised reply. "Of course she must know all sooner or later—I prefer telling her the truth, to leaving her to her own suspicions. They say women are always ready to think hard of other women, and I was determined she should not of you."

"Oh, of course she was to know I was married," said the girl, quickly. "But what I mean is this—why did you give my real name? To be sure Julian told you to do so—but I think it would have been better to have taken some other. Suppose some one who knows me or him should hear of such a person being here. They would very naturally make inquiries—and then the whole story would come out, at once. Now if you had called me Mrs. Jones, or Mrs. Smith, such a thing could not happen."

"But, Anna, you forget how very large a place we are in. We know no one here. We shall live secluded as two hermits, and go away in a few weeks. No one will find us—I am sure of that."

Anna still looked doubtful.

"And even if they do," continued the girl, 'which is supposing a most unlikely thing, what difference can it make? Of course, you intend to acknowledge this marriage, and it must be done soon. So in case we are discovered the thing that must come to pass will only take place a little sooner."

"Very true. I had not thought of that."

"There is another reason," said Nancy—but a knock at the door interrupted her, and she rose and opened it. A quiet, neatly-dressed servant girl entered and placed upon the table an impromptu supper of oysters, bread and butter, coffee and cake. She scarcely raised her eyes while she remained in the room, and when Nancy said they needed nothing more, withdrew with a low courtesy.

"And that reason?" said Anna, as she closed the door behind her. "Is this," was the impressive answer. "Whatever you do now will affect the welfare of your child. If you would never give that child reason to reproach you for any unhappiness life may bring it, claim your true place now and keep it. That is all I have to say or you to hear. And we will drop this subject and try this tempting little supper."

They lingered long at the pleasant meal, and the hands of Anna's watch pointed to the half hour after midnight, when they entered their sleeping room. She knelt for a moment beside the bed, and uttered a simple prayer, in which we may be sure her absent husband was remembered, and then with their heads lying upon the same pillow, the two friends slept as quietly as children till late on the following morning.

CHAPTER IV.

LIFE AND DEATH.

It was a stormy day. The morning had broken with dark and lowering clouds and a heavy fall of rain—late in the afternoon the sleet had turned to snow, that fell regularly in broad white flakes without rest or stay. A wind was abroad that moaned and cried around the lonely house—a wind that neither raved nor blustered, but went about in a sad, searching way, making the poor shiver and huddle closer over their scanty fires, and the rich turn from the window with a vague feeling of sorrow and desolation, though they knew not for who or what.

In the small parlor of Mrs. Morley a young man was sitting in close conversation with that worthy lady. He was below the medium size, symmetrically formed and dressed in the height of fashion. His long black hair fell in heavy curls upon his shoulders—his eyes were dark and piercing, and a well-trimmed moustache and beard gave character to his dark, handsome face. He leaned carelessly back in his easy chair, and a hand, white and slender as a girl's and adorned with a splendid diamond ring, caressed his flowing beard. He was handsome certainly, but he looked neither good nor true. He had a crafty smile and an evil glance in his flashing eyes, and as he listened to what his companion was saying he looked repulsively cruel and cunning. This man was James Alford, to whom Anna unconsciously owed her present home.

"And so the young lady never goes out," he said, in a low, musical tone, as he stretched his limbs luxuriously before the fire.

"Never, sir," replied Mrs. Morley, allowing her eyes to rest with a visible admiration upon those graceful limbs and well-shaped feet. There was a meaning in her glance as it traveled slowly up to his face, that made him smile sardonically as he watched her through his half-closed eyes. She colored, moved uneasily in her chair, and repeated:

"She never goes out. I heard Miss Gray urging her to walk the other day, but she didn't care to."

"Is she hipped?" asked Alford, with a yawn.

"You mean blue, sorry, down in the mouth, I suppose."

He nodded.

"Bless you, no. I can hear her every time I go out in the hall, singing away up there like a little canary. They have got a piano up there now—she's a fine player, I think."

"Humph! She ought to be, I should think!" said Alford, quickly. "I'm not going to blab, my charming Kitty, so you needn't look at me so eagerly."

The widow bridled and simpered.

"I never saw such a man! Heaven knows I haven't the least curiosity about me. I don't ask any questions. I don't want to know only one thing, and when you have told me that you may shut up a dozen girls and get me for keeper if you choose."

"We all know you women are never curious," said the young man, with a scornful laugh. "But now you have come to the bone of the matter, what is it? Give us the sum total at once, Kitty."

"Are you in love with her?" and she pointed up towards Anna's room.

Alford chuckled silently.

"That's a hard question, Kitty. Perhaps I love her, perhaps I hate her."

The woman's face darkened.

"If you love her and mean to marry her or anything of that kind look out for some one else to take my place. I wont stay here another day."

"Eh! what? Kitty, you don't mean what you say. You don't know what you are talking about."

"I tell you I wont stay!" she repeated, spitefully. "I see it all plain enough now, and I'll not be made a fool of any longer. Take the house key and see if some other woman will come here. *I* never will keep your wife or your mistress for you;" and flinging the key at his feet she dashed out of the room and down the basement stairs.

Had a thunderbolt fallen at the young man's feet, he could scarcely have been more astonished. He sat bolt upright, staring at the key a few moments, but by degrees a sense of the ludicrous nature of the whole thing stole over him and he gave way to a hearty but silent fit of laughter. He walked to the mirror, eyed himself mischievously and complacently, and exclaimed, with infinite gusto:

"By Jupiter! That old fool is taking a fancy to me! Was there ever anything so absurd, except the idea that I should return it. Am I getting so dangerous? Am I turning into a lady-killer?" and again he shook his sides at the bare idea.

"I must call back my fair friend," he thought, when he had recoved his composure a little, "or she'll be after hanging herself, or taking a dose of bedbug poison. Ten to one she's suspended at this moment from the kitchen towel."

He opened the door and listened in the hall. No one was near, and going to the basement stairs he called in a low voice:

"Mrs. Morley! Mrs. Morley, are you there?"

"Yes," said the lady, sulkily. She was doing penance on the lower stair.

"And alone?"

"Yes. Don't you see I am?" was the doleful reply.

He was near losing all by an explosion of laughter as he caught a glimpse of her through the dusky light, but restraing himself by a violent effort, he said, tenderly:

"Then come up again, or I'll go and shoot myself at once. I'll wait for you in the parlor just five minutes."

He had barely time to close the door behind him when the lady appeared. She looked flushed and excited, but no longer angry. He took her hand and led her towards her chair. The key was still lying upon the floor and picking it up he handed it to her, with the significant remark:

"Perhaps it is as well, Mrs. Morley, that this thing has taken place. I thought you were nearly perfect till to-day, but now I see you are not an angel—only a woman."

"I am sorry," faltered the poor widow, who, having taken a violent fancy to the youth, thought she had lost ground forever.

"Don't make any excuses," he said, gallantly, "or I shall be tempted to forget all this knowledge and go back to my old opinion again. Now sit down and tell me what stung you—what the devil did you mean?"

"I thought—that is, I didn't know—I thought you loved her," stammered the woman. "And it made me hate her and you too."

"My dear Kitty!"

"I know I was a fool," she continued, "but you wouldn't answer my question. Now tell me the truth—tell me honestly, don't you love her?"

"Not a bit," was the careless reply.

"And haven't any thoughts of marrying her?"

"Can you ask?" he said, with a meaning glance that made her color with delight. "No, Kitty, I wouldn't marry her if she was Queen of England. I have better taste, I hope."

"She *is* a chit of a girl, to be sure," said the widow, eyeing him languishingly. "No form, no manner, and I can't see any beauty either."

"Nor I either," said Alford, quietly.

The widow drew nearer and placed her hand upon the arm of his chair.

"Then why is she here? I haven't any curiosity, as I said before, but I should like to know the reason of this one thing."

"Go away you seducing creature. If you look at me in that way I shall tell you the whole story, and then I shall be in a pretty box."

She smiled and laid her hand on his shoulder. A very pretty hand it was, too, and she knew it. But he shrank from the touch in affected fear.

"Kitty, you must remember I'm only a mortal," he said, very seriously, "and not tempt me too far. I can't tell you what I don't know, can I?"

"Ah! but you do know something," she urged.

"Hang it, I knew I should do it if you came near me!" he exclaimed—and putting his arm around her waist he laid his head on her shoulder with a saucy smile, and continued:

"You are sending me to the gentleman below in double quick time, Kitty, but it can't be helped. The truth of the matter is just this. She is no more married than I am."

"I knew it," said the widow, spitefully.

"She is only—you know what I mean, but I am not going to offend you by saying it," he continued. "The man she loved was once a merchant in the city, and now he is away from her one of his friends is trying to get her away. He found out when she was coming here and set me on the track. I have caged the bird and by and by when everything is smooth and quiet he will be here to make love on his own account."

"What iniquity," said the woman gaily as she played with his glossy curls.

"It can't be helped. But Kitty, how is it about the letters?"

"I have tried—but I can't get them. I know they come, but I can't find out under what name. Miss Grey always gets them from the office."

"Bad—very bad," said Alford compressing his lips. "We *must* have them—they would be half the battle won. Follow her in disguise—knock her down—poison her—I don't care what you do, if you only get one."

"You are in earnest about the thing," said his accomplice, eyeing him narrowly.

He colored, bit his lip and said more quietly, "They are very important, and my employer depends upon you. Can I tell him that you will get one?"

"Yes—in one way or another, if he will only give me time. If I had no one but her to deal with, it would be easy enough—but Nancy Grey suspects me—though she don't know of what. However the thing shall be done."

"Then I'll give myself no further trouble about it," said Alford, rising and throwing his cloak over his shoulders. The woman hung around him as he took his hat and moved towards the door, and said, eagerly:

"You'll come again, soon?"

"This week, without fail. Keep a good watch, Kitty—you won't regret it. And if anything happens, you will know where to find me."

She still lingered, looking askance at him, and keeping her hand upon the latch of the door. He put his arm around her waist—drew her close to his bosom, and murmuring something in her ear that made her pale cheek flush, passed from the room. The sardonic smile that curled his lip deepened into a hearty laugh, as he reached the crowded street.

In the gathering twilight, of that evening, Anna sat at her little cabinet piano, playing snatches of songs she had learned at school, and waiting for Nancy, who had gone to the office for letters. She had grown thin and pale in these weeks of seclusion, and her young face wore a sad anxious look, as if some heavy foreboding was hanging over her.

On that night a pleasant melancholy stole over her, as she played and sang. Her songs were Julian's favorites—her waltzes, those to which she had whirled around the room, encircled by his arm. And on the little toilet table by her side lay Nancy's work, a beautifully embroidered christening robe of muslin for Julian's child. All things spoke to her of him, and she looked forward with an anxious yearning to the time when her trial should be over, and she clasped to his heart again.

She left the piano and going to the little stand sat down and touched the dainty robe with a loving hand. She, herself, had made no preparations for the little stranger—(I am constrained to confess she had a perfect horror of her needle, and kept at a safe distance when any making or mending was going on,) but now, actuated by some hidden impulse, she began to work upon the flower Nancy had left unfinished. The occupation beguiled her of many a weary thought—she seemed nearer to Julian and to her child while thus engaged—the striking of the clock upon the mantle-piece first started her from her fit of industry.

She looked up with a comical glance of wonder and amusement, as she saw what progress she had unconsciously made, and holding up her work between her and the light was examining it with the greatest satisfaction, when Nancy Grey entered.

"What! You turned industrious, of all things in the world!" she exclaimed, as she shook the snow from her bonnet and circular. "I haven't a doubt that you have spoiled all I have done, you witch."

"Indeed I haven't!" exclaimed Anna, stoutly. "Every stitch is taken as nicely as yours—indeed I think I have rather improved upon this little spray—yours was rather stiff and clumsy—but mine droops as naturally as if it grew. See," and she pointed to the work as proof of her assertion.

"You are a self-conceited thing," said Nancy, pleasantly. "But in consideration of your unheard of good behavior, you shall have a reward. Choose—but choose wisely."

"A letter from Julian?" cried Anna, with flushed cheeks and eager eyes.

"Not to-day," said Nancy, soothingly. "You know it isn't quite time for his to come. But I have a letter for you, from home, in your mother's hand-writing. Isn't that good news?"

"Oh give it to me!" cried Anna, impatient of delay.

From an envelope addressed to "Katherine St. Leger," and post-marked at Bel Air, Nancy took a letter marked "Haste" and gave it to the girl. An enclosure still remained, directed in a scrawling and unknown hand, to "Mrs. Julian Ellingwood." This she reserved till the home letter had been read and rejoiced over.

But Anna had only broken the seal and glanced over the first page, when she exclaimed in an altered voice:

"Nancy—read it. I cannot! Oh my poor father," and hiding her face in her hands she sunk down upon the floor and lay there while Nancy read aloud:

MY DEAR CHILD:—Your long silence has filled me with a thousand fears, and if it were not for the illness of your father, I should start for Bel Air at once. But he is very ill. I have not left his bedside for a week, and now the physicians say there is no hope.

He cannot live many days. You must return to us at once. I know you will do so. Remember how much he has loved you, and how anxious your long silence has made us both. I shall look for you by the next stage.

I write this while he is sleeping and am so distracted with anxiety and grief, that I scarcely know what I am saying. But ask Nancy to see that you leave nothing—and request your teacher to send her bill by you, so that I may remit the money to her by the next mail.

Good-bye, my darling child. You will soon be all I shall have to love. Your poor father has just waked, and on finding I was writing to you, says, feebly—"Give Anna my love and tell her I cannot die without seeing her." Come at once, for minutes are hours with us here. YOUR MOTHER.

The tears fell fast from Nancy's eyes as she finished, but Anna crouching at her feet, neither sighed nor wept. Lifting up a pale and stony face, at last, she said:

"Is that all? Have you read every word?"

"Yes—every word. And now what is to be done?"

"Nothing," said Anna, in a dreary voice, putting the hair from her eyes and laying her aching head in Nancy's lap.

"Don't say so, Anna," was the quick reply. "You *must* go to him—you cannot stay away and let him die without seeing you."

"He will curse me—and I shall deserve it," said Anna, in the same listless way. "He has loved me all his life, and now I am about to repay him by leaving him to die alone. God will punish me," she added, bitterly. "He will punish me in my own child. He will heap sorrow and disgrace upon my head, and I shall never dare to murmur."

Her cheek was flushed deeply—her eyes wandered, and the hand that Nancy touched was like fire. Filled with fear, she bent over her and asked, anxiously—

"Anna—are you ill? You are talking strangely. Had you not better go and lie down a little while."

"I will arise and go to my father"—was the vague reply. "Where have I seen those words Nancy. Find them for me, and then I will go to him."

"Good Heavens! Look at me Anna," said Nancy, who now wished to lead her mind away from the grief that seemed to have stunned her. "There was another letter in the envelope for you. Shall I get it?"

"Is it worth while?"

"Yes—*don't* look so, Anna, or you will break my heart. There it is—read it—and to-night, after you are asleep, I will pack our things and we will go home to-morrow."

"We shall be in time then to see him," said the girl, with a strange smile, and putting back her offered letter, she threw herself down upon the lounge and said, listlessly:

"Read it, Nancy, if it is anything important, tell me. I am tired—worn out—and I must try and sleep."

She closed her eyes, and Nancy broke the seal of the letter—saw with surprise that it was dated from Bel Air House—then turning to the signature of "Amelia Griffin," commenced the epistle with a puzzled look, and read as follows:

"MY POOR YOUNG FRIEND:—How will you hear the news I have to tell you? And oh, why did you not confide in me. It would have been better, and I would never have betrayed you. But I will not reproach you now. God help and comfort you, my poor misguided child!

I know all. Your late husband told me of your secret marriage, and begged me to console you for his loss. I was with him in his last short illness—but I cannot *write* of his grief and remorse—of his love and sorrow for you. Come to me, my poor child, or, at least, let me come to you, and I will tell you all. He left a letter in my care for you—it is a precious charge and I must give it myself into your own hands.

Write to me at once, or have Nancy Grey do so. Look upon me as your mother—I have all a mother's pity for you. If you cannot travel I must come to you at once. My heart is sore for you and for myself—for I feel as if I was to be blamed, in a measure, for this sad affair.

It was Julian's last wish that I should not inform you of his illness till all was over. You could not have reached him in time—he died only six hours after the first painful symptoms manifested themselves. But he died calmly and happily—and loving you and his unborn child.

Let me come to you at once. I have pity, sympathy, and love, for you—my time and purse are alike at your service.

Your affectionate friend,
AMELIA GRIFFIN."

A slip cut from a newspaper fluttered from the letter upon the table, and Nancy read—

"Died suddenly at Bel Air House, Jan. 20th, of organic disease of the heart, Mr. Julian Ellingwood, in the 23rd year of his age."

"My God!" said the girl, in a stifled voice. "I can never tell her! Dead! dead! Impossible!"

"What is it?" said Anna, roused by her unguarded words. "Give me the letter; what is impossible?"

"Nothing," said Nancy, evasively. "Go to sleep now, my darling, and to-morrow we will go to your father."

"The letter! the letter!" said the girl, imperiously, springing to her feet. "You want to hide it from me; give it to me at once!"

In that mood, she could take no denial.

"Wait—let me tell you first," said her unhappy friend, but Anna snatched the letter from her hand, and went towards the light.

"It will kill her!" moaned Nancy to herself. "Oh! what a wretched night this has been."

But Anna was silent. The paper dropped from her hand upon the floor, and she did not stoop to pick it up. Alarmed at her quiet manner, Nancy put her hand upon her shoulder and looked into her face. It was white and fixed as marble; dark circles were forming under the staring eyes; the lips were drawn back from the white and glistening teeth; and every feature betrayed the heighth of mental and physical anguish.

"Anna! Anna! Speak to me!"

She breathed hard and quick, threw up her clenched hands, and gave one wild scream that rang through every room of the lonely house, and fell upon the floor. That merciful swoon left her alike unconscious of her dreadful loss, or the pangs of maternity brought on prematurely by the suddenness of the shock?

That startling scream roused Mrs. Morley, in her parlor, from a brown study into which she had fallen, and sent her hurrying up to Anna's room. The experienced eye detected the trouble at once, and ringing for her servant, she dispatched her in all haste for a physician, while, with Nancy's help, she laid the unconscious girl in her bed. Leaving Nancy to disrobe her, she went into the outer room, to prepare for the arrival of the physician. The letter lay upon the floor as Anna had left it, and after one glance at the address, she snatched it up, concealed it in her bosom, and went about her task. When all was made comfortable, and the physician had arrived, she hurried to her own room, and sent her servant out again in the storm, to find Alford. This duty attended to, she took up her post once more beside the sick bed, while Nancy, half crazed with sorrow and anxiety, wrote a hurried note to Miss Griffin, telling her of Anna's unfortunate illness, and begging her to go to her home and tell her mother all. The fatal letter, in the confusion, was not missed, and Mrs. Morley hugged it to her bosom in insane delight.

The clock was on the stroke of twelve, when the first cry of poor Anna's fatherless child broke upon the air. She lay in a kind of stupor while they wrapped it in its soft white blankets, and laid it by her side. The physician held a cordial to her lips—she opened her eyes and gazed upon the helpless little thing—"bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh," that moaned feebly there. They laid it gently in her arms, she gazed sadly and tenderly down upon the little face, and murmured—

"Poor little child! You will live to curse this hour."

She kissed it, sadly, fondly, but with no feeling of joy or pride. There was little of the young mother in her look or tone, and she laid the baby back again with a heavy sigh. The grief for Julian was too deep for tears, and even the unconscious murmur of his child could not divert her from the mournful memory.

While she lay there, pale and silent, with clasped hands and closed eyes, a low knock at the door, and the voice of the servant told Mrs. Morley that Alford was below. With a few last words to Nancy, she glided from the room and went down to meet him. He looked eager and excited.

"Well, what has happened, that you send for me at this time of night?" he asked, as she entered.

"Hush!" she said, with a warning gesture. "Speak very low, for the doctor is upstairs, and I don't care to have him know that I have a caller at this hour."

"The doctor!" he said, in a whisper. "What do you mean?"

"I mean," she said, with a triumphant smile, "that your lady friend up there is not only a wife, but a mother!"

Alford's dark eyes emitted a sudden flash of light.

"Have you seen the child?" he asked, eagerly. "Is it well and strong? Is it a son?"

"It is a girl, and as fine a child as I ever saw."

The young man caught her gaily by the waist, and waltzed with her round the room till she was giddy and out of breath.

"You are the very queen of messengers!" he exclaimed, with a strange laugh, "and shall have the handsomest silk dress in New York for your good news. My employer will grow young again when he finds it is a girl. It is just what he has hoped and prayed for."

"Why, what can you care about the child?" said Mrs. Morley, with a curious glance.

He checked himself suddenly, as he saw the look, and answered gaily,—

"Don't ask me now, or I shall tell you. You shall know soon. In the meantime, take the best care of mother and child. If you let either of them die, I never will forgive you—mind that," and with a moody look he turned to go.

"I haven't told you all yet," she said, hesitatingly. "She was reading a letter when she was taken ill, and I half believe it was some bad news she got that ailed her, though I didn't have time to see."

"And you let this letter escape you!" said Alford, in a tone of extreme vexation. "Was ever anything so unfortunate? Go back in the room, and don't leave it for a moment till you get it."

"Don't fret," she answered, with a significant smile. "I didn't have time to see what was in it, but I never said I didn't have time to *get* it. Let me alone for that," and she laid the letter in his hand.

"Ten thousand pardons for my reproaches, and more than ten million thanks for your slight of hand," he said, with a beaming smile, as he glanced at the superscription and signature.

"This will be a treat indeed. Bring the light nearer."

But before he had read a dozen lines the smile faded from his lip, and the color from his cheek. He turned white and cold, and springing to his feet, exclaimed passionately—

"It cannot be! I will never believe it!"

The room seemed whirling around him; he grasped instinctively at the back of a chair to support himself, and stood swaying to and fro like a drunken man.

[TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT.]

GENEROSITY TO RIVALS TRUE WISDOM.

Room for your monarch—room! quoth a youthful Oak in pride,
To neighbor Elm that beautous there was towering by his side,
And tossing high his lofty head—avaunt, I say, more room,
Or soon forsooth my growing form will shade you o'er with gloom;
Or if perchance a dislodged root shall leave its clayey bed,
Your marred charms will prove the power by which the blow was sped.

The Elm in her sweet foliage concealed a scornful smile,
Then coolly tossed in ambient air her graceful arms awhile;
Prithee Sir Oak the doom's unjust—you see and you shall judge,
The mountain's close upon my rear, an inch I could not budge;
If needs must be and you would prove ambition's soulless elf,
Improve yon plain at your right hand, go there and spread yourself.

The forest-king was startled—aye pleased at this rebuke,
And granted to the queenly Elm a fast admiring look.
The world was wide he reasoned for their respective charms,
Good will was politic—such worth deserved a shelter in his arms;
Then gloriously *both* flourished strong in a kind embrace,
And bid defiance to life's blasts with branches interlaced.

ATTENDING PARTIES, &C.

OSHKOSH, (Wis.) May 15th, 1856.

MR. LEDGER:—Some of my lady acquaintances and myself have had some warm disputes in relation to married ladies attending parties, theaters, and riding on pleasant afternoons, with unmarried gentlemen, while their husbands are employed at home or abroad. Please favor us with your views on the subject, and much oblige an old subscriber. Yours truly. BADGER.

It may be possible for a lady to visit a place of amusement, or to ride out of an afternoon, with a gentleman, while her husband is at work, without violating any rule of propriety or decorum. The question of the propriety or impropriety of the act turns altogether on the *spirit* with which it is done. As a general thing, however, a married woman who is promiscuous in her selection of beaux, and *makes it a practice* to go into public with anybody who will accompany her, is liable to most injurious suspicions and imputations, and her husband would have good reason to be severely uneasy at her conduct.

* * *

BOSTON, May 5, 1856.

MR. LEDGER:—If a gentleman, while walking hurriedly along the street, passes some fair pedestrian, walking with equal velocity the other way, and unluckily chances to catch a button of his coat into her $100 crape shawl, and the result is that before either party can "break up," said shawl is most sadly rent, and before he can offer an apology of any kind the lady quits him with an "*Oh, you ugly thing!*"—now, as such attachments are not mutual, though frequent, I would like to learn what mode you would suggest for a fellow to get gallantly out of them.

Yours truly,
WASHINGTON ST.

The way to get "gallantly" out of such a mishap is to do exactly what justice demands, namely: Make a courteous and respectful apology to the lady, if she does not, as in the case mentioned by our correspondent, debar a gentleman from making the *amende honorable.*

POETRY AND PROSE.

What is the difference between poetry and prose? This question may be answered most satisfactorily by a few examples. As the latest example of poetry let us take "the song of Hiawatha," and as for prose we can easily find any quantity in the daily newspapers.

The poem opens with the line:

"Should you ask me, whence these stories?"

This question, even in a newspaper, would pass for poetry, but suppose the editor were called to answer a charge of libel, he would say, "As you ask me, whence this article, I will answer, I will tell you,"—*that* would be prose. Hence we are reminded of an old saying, which, however, has no connexion with the present subject, and which we quote merely as an example of what may be either prose or poetry according to circumstances; "Ask me no questions and I will tell you no lies;" under ordinary circumstances it is prose; placed as a motto before "the song of Hiawatha," it would be pronounced by competent judges, poetry.

If you ask a politician, what foundation his speculations and assertions regarding courts, cabinets, caucuses, &c., have, what are his authorities, he will repeat a long catalogue of names, beginning with Baron Humbugousky and ending with Jack Story—all of which is plain prose. Longfellow has given us the same catalogue in poetry; and we venture to throw out the hint to those sagacious individuals who endeavor to pass off on the public their own speculations and predictions as undoubted facts, to quote as their authority the illustrious personages mentioned by the poet;

"Mahn, the loon, the wild goose, Wawa,
The blue heron, the shuh-shuh-gah,
And the grouse, the Mushkodasa."

It is our private opinion that when a politician gives the names of the persons from whom he has obtained highly important information, as for instance, about the results of "The Peace Conference" at Paris, he should always speak in poetry, and the names above quoted will answer his purpose as well as any.

"Honor be to Mudjekeewis!"—

that is poetry. "Hurrah for President Pierce"—that is nothing better than prose.

"He had stolen the belt of Wampum
From the wreck of Mishe-Mokwa,
From the Great Bear of the mountains,
From the terror of the nations,
As he lay asleep and cumbrous
On the summit of the mountains,"—

that is poetry. "We have the pleasure of informing the public that John Wiggins, an efficient ex-member of the Police force, has succeeded in capturing and conveying to the Tombs the fellow named Joe Hooks, alias, Billy Mudge, who picked the pockets of George Law, on last Wednesday, and ran away with a gold watch, a cigar, and a night-key. The stolen property has not been recovered."—That is prose.

"Once a warrior, very angry,
Seized his grandmother, and threw her
Up into the sky at midnight,
Right against the moon he threw her,"—

that is poetry. Prose does not record any similar feat; it reverses it, and sometimes tells us of drunkards and madmen flinging their female relations down stairs, over a railing, through a window, or out of doors into the street.

"I can blow you strong, my brother;"—

an excellent line of poetry for quotation by some writers aud speakers of windy prose that we and our readers have heard of.

"Hi—aw—ha!" replied the chorus,
"Way—ha—way!" the mystic chorus.

"Hi—aw—ha" and "Way—ha—way" in poetry are equivalent to "hurrah!" in prose.

"Happy are you, Hiawatha,
Having such a wife to love you!
Happy are you, Laughing Water
Having such a noble husband!"

This is all very well in poetry, but too many husbands and wives know to their sorrow that the very opposite of it forms the ordinary prose of life. Some people say that the poets err in making both courtship and marriage poetical, for according to their experience, courtship only is poetry while marriage is plain, rugged prose. We agree, however, with the poets:—women are the sweetest music and the noblest poetry always and everywhere. Who can describe their loveliness except in the beautiful language of poetry? We confess our inability to find anything in prose to compare with Longfellow's poetical description of

"Minnehaha, Laughing Water;
With her moods of shade and sunshine,
Eyes that smiled and frowned alternate,
Feet as rapid as the river,
Tresses flowing like the water,
And as musical a laughter,—
Handsomest of all the women
In the land of handsome women."

If our readers have not by this time, perceived the very wide—the heaven-from-earth difference between poetry and prose, we advise them to read "The Song of Hiawatha" from beginning to end with one eye fixed on a daily newspaper. The amount of information and amusement which they may thus obtain will amply repay them for the trouble of making the beautiful experiment. Hiawatha and a daily newspaper, combined in this manner, are nearly as instructive and entertaining as the NEW YORK LEDGER.

* * *

MR. LEDGER:—Please answer me through your columns where the sewing-machine can be obtained, (and at what price,) that you spoke of in your paper some months ago, made by one of your former journeymen printers, and oblige S. A. W.

We have lost all traces of the young man. We believe he made a contract with the Jerome Clock Company to manufacture the machines; but, as that concern has failed, we presume he has had to make other arrangements.

* * *

REST AT A DISTANCE.—Leisure is a very pleasant garment to look at, but it is a very bad one to wear.

THE LETTER HOME.

BY WARRONCE WONDERING.

In the shade of a southern dwelling,
All fragrant with southern flowers;
Where the sweet spring buds were swelling,
Perfuming the sunny hours.

Where the laughter and songs of children,
Where childhood's golden hair,
Like music and sunshine floated
Unchecked on the balmy air;

A pale young father was standing
By a pale young mother's side,
And thus spake the pale young mother,
And the father thus replied:

"It is time we again were writing
To the dear old northern home;
I know they are watching, waiting,
For the letter that does not come."

"But, my love, I am hardly able
To handle the tiny pen;
And *you* are too worn and feeble
To attempt the task again."

"But the letter must be written
To the father and mother dear;
To the brother and the sisters
That they suffer not with fear.

For our tender-hearted parents,
In their homes so far away,
Must know not that their poor children
Are wasting day by day."

So the letter was written sadly,
With many a weary sigh;
But its tone was as gay and sportive,
As if written merrily.

And forth on its northern journey
That letter was duly sent;
With a hearty and cheerful greeting,
To the dear old home it went.

It spoke of the happy meeting
Which the future had in store;
When the summer should find them gathered
In the dear old home once more.

But no word of the young strength failing,
Of the hectic and hollow cheek,
Not a sentence of doubt, or warning,
Or fear, did the letter speak.

Of the light from the young eyes fading,
Of the tears that were nightly shed,
Of the pain, and the dread, and anguish,
Not a single word was said.

So, fearless and unsuspecting,
Around the old homestead hearth,
The letter was read one evening
With pleasure and loving mirth.

And they laughed as they spoke of the absent—
Ah me! but they did not know
How the cheeks that they loved were paling
Where the South's gay roses blow!

Yet e'en as they read that letter
And talked of it smilingly,
All wasted and wan the writer
Was hurrying home to die.

And now the green grass is growing
Fresh over the quiet breast
Of one of the best, and the dearest,
That ever was home to his rest.

And still by that southern dwelling,
Wave the roses as sweet as before;
But the father, and mother, and children,
Are breathing their fragrance no more.

MISTAKES OF A MORNING.

BY LOUIS N. BURDICK.

It was the morning after the ball, and Paul Burnett, in half-dress, was lounging upon the sofa in his apartment. He held the morning paper in his hand, but his eyes, instead of scanning its pages, were fixed vacantly upon some of the objects visible from the window, or else following the movements of his servant, who was bustling about the room, placing things in their right order. His thoughts were evidently of an agreeable nature, if the varying expressions of his face could be taken as an index to his mind. For a long while he remained thus, entirely engrossed by the pleasing fancies which he conjured up; though now and then a shade of pexplexity would flit for a moment across his handsome features. He seemed, at length, to have found a determination of some sort, for he sat upright and called aloud to his servant.

"Sam," said he.

"Sir," he answered, stopping and turning toward his master.

"Black my boots, Sam, and bring them up immediately."

"Yes, sir;" and he started to execute the order.

Paul arose as the door closed, and commenced making his toilet. He was more particular than usual, in so doing, and paid the most minute attention to every particular adjustment of his dress.

"I can't remain longer the least uncertain," he soliloquised, half aloud, as he fitted an immaculate collar to his neck; "last night accomplished the business, as far as I am concerned; and if it were not for that worldly-minded aunt of hers, I should be in extacies. I'm so violently in love that really, I feel quite unhappy. Dear Christine!" and the last expression was accompanied with a sigh so plaintive that if the lady had been present she would have been completely convinced of the sincerity of her lover. "But, I wonder," he continued, after a moment's reflection, "if that voluble aunt of hers will throw any obstacles in the way of our union. I half fear that she will, and yet I know of no earthly reason why she should. She has no cause for looking otherwise than favorably upon me. She certainly knows nothing prejudicial to my character, that I am aware of. I don't purchase my boots of her shoemaker, consequently, I don't owe him anything; neither have I ever, to my knowledge, kicked her footman. Christine, they say, has fifteen thousand dollars in her own right. Now I wonder if that is so. Hope it is, upon my soul, for I love her to distraction; not only that, I've promised to marry her—that is, of course, if her aunt's consent can be gained, and if not, why, we are to elope. That would surprise her some, I guess. There's a shade of doubt, in my mind, regarding that solicitous relative of Christine; she may think it's the money I'm after, and nothing else. But such conduct in me would be infamous. No, no. I love Christine dearly. The fifteen thousand dollars she will bring is not, to be sure, any objection with me—but I should love her just as well, I'm fully convinced, if it was thirty thousand instead. Well," he continued, seizing the hair-brush, "I'll not remain longer in doubt; I will know the aunt's opinion before another hour, be it favorable or otherwise. I can't remain in this state of uncertainty. Sam! Sam!" he shouted aloud.

"Well, sir," yelled that personage from below.

"I'm waiting for those boots."

"Yes, sir; coming directly, sir."

And directly thereafter he made his appearance with the boots, shining like a dark mirror, in his hands. Paul slipped them on, gave a last glance at his elegant person in the glass, and then, taking his hat and cane, he went upon his delicate mission.

On Bleecker street resided Mrs. Kate Darell, and with Mrs. Kate Darell resided Miss Christine Darell, the fair captivator of Paul Burnett's heart. The young lady was eighteen, an orphan, and eminently beautiful and accomplished. Her aunt was thirty, but she had preserved her youthful beauty, and looked full five years younger than she really was. She married the brother of Christine's father at the age of twenty-two, and three years later had the misfortune to be left a widow with a fine fortune.

Paul Burnett, after leaving his house, proceeded directly to the residence of Mrs. Darell, and ascending the steps, with a palpitating heart, rang the door-bell. A few moments later he was ushered into the presence of the widow, whom he found alone. His eyes swept the apartment in vain for Christine, and after greeting the lady present, he made bold to inquire for her.

"She has not made her appearance below, this morning," was the answer; "she complains of a severe head-ache, and feels unable to arise."

"I regret to hear it," said Paul; though he was not sorry that an opportunity was presented for him to meet the widow alone.

He seated himself, and for awhile a lively conversation was kept up between the two on indifferent subjects. At last Paul, uneasy till he could learn her decision, ventured to approach the subject nearest his heart.

"I have called upon you this morning, Mrs. Darell," he began, moving nearer to that lady, "for a particular object."

The widow bowed, and prepared to listen to what he had to communicate.

"Yes," he continued, "I have a secret to impart to you, a secret, madam, that deeply interests yourself."

The widow looked up, and smiled encouragingly. She believed she comprehended his purpose.

"The fact is, madam, I have conceived a strong affection for—for—"

"Proceed," said the widow, with a shy smile.

"Excuse my hesitancy," he exclaimed, blushing slightly; "it is a very delicate matter, and I confess to some embarrassment."

"Well."

"Well, madam, I have a request to make."

"Explain it, Mr. Burnett. I am sure, I shall be most happy to grant any request to you, if it lies in my power."

"O, it certainly does. One word from you would render me entirely happy."

"Then so easy a mode of rendering a person happy should not be denied."

"You inspire me with courage and fresh hope, madam, and I will come at once to my subject."

He was, indeed, greatly encouraged by her manner, and accordingly drew nearer to her, and took her unresisting hand in his.

"To be brief, my dear Mrs. Darell," he continued, "I am in love—deeply, irremedibly in love!"

The widow was silent, but her eyes sought the floor, and a heightened color glowed upon her cheek.

"For a long time, since my acquaintance with you, has this passion existed. You cannot have been entirely unconscious of it, madam; you must, I think, have perceived the enjoyment I have experienced in my visits here."

"I will acknowledge, said the widow, bestowing upon him a tender glance, that I have, ere now, detected in your speech and actions that which partially convinced me of what you say."

"Ah! I thought as much. I could not conceal entirely from you the ardent love which moves me."

Again the widow gazed with a tender air upon him, and he continued:

"This morning, therefore, nothing but your consent being wanted, I determined to learn my fate from your lips. And may I hope, dear madam, for your approval?"

"My dear Paul," exclaimed the lady, in a tone so affectionate that he felt sure of success, "since this declaration from you has been made, I feel no hesitancy in assuring you that, among the numerous gentlemen of my acquaintance, there is no one whom I could select so worthy in every respect as yourself."

"O, dear madam, you render me the happiest of men. Then," he continued, raising his eyes to hers, "you give me leave to consider myself as an accepted visitor?"

"I can refuse you nothing."

"A thousand, thousand thanks!" he exclaimed rapturously, as he placed his lips to her hand and kissed it ardently.

The widow thought it strange that he did not prefer her lips instead, but they were at this moment interrupted by hearing the door bell violently rung. Both started up, and Paul, unable to control his happiness, requested Mrs. Darell to present his compliments to her lovely niece, and took his departure, promising to make another and early call.

As he passed through the hall, his exuberant feeling of joy received something of a check, at the sight of the gentleman who was just entering. He drew himself haughtily up, and the two passed each other with frowning brows. It was apparent that they had met before, and that a feeling of antagonism existed between them. Paul hastened to his rooms.

"I wonder what that individual wants at Mrs. Darell's?" he said, throwing himself into a seat. "That red vest of his haunts me almost continually—especially since I began to entertain an affection for Christine. It's singular what an effect the sight of him has upon me. If he wouldn't continually appear in that red vest I might endure him. I don't relish his visits to that house. To be sure, Christine is betrothed to me; nevertheless, I would like it much better if she would now discard that individual and his fiery garment. Whenever I go there I am certain to meet him, though a word never passed between us in our lives. Either I meet him coming out when I am going in, or I meet him entering when I am taking my leave. I detest the sight of that red vest, and I abhor the man that it encloses. He must be an atrocious villian; I'm firmly convinced of that. There is something satanic in his very look. If he has never yet committed any desperate crime, it's my opinion he contemplates doing so at the first opportunity. At any rate, when I am married I'll never permit him to enter my house."

In less than half an hour after, and while Paul was still buried in thought, the head of Sam was thrust into the room, and he was informed that a gentleman wished to see him. He ordered him shown up.

Sam vanished, and almost immediately returned and ushered in the visitor. Paul glanced at him as he advanced, and almost bounded to his feet with astonishment.

It was the red vest!

He entered with hat upon head and a sort of indignant fury in his look. He paused a few paces in front of Paul and assumed an attitude of defence.

"Well, sir, what is your pleasure with me?" enquired Paul.

"Pleasure!" he echoed, in a loud tone of voice, "I have no pleasure with you, sir; you are not a pleasant sight, by any means, sir. I hold you in the extremest detestation, sir!"

"Well, then," exclaimed Paul, with indignation, "what is your business here?"

"This is my business, sir," broke forth he of the red vest: "You are a scoundrel! You are a thief and an incendiary! You are a highway robber and an assassin—a burglar and—"

"Stop, sir!" shouted Paul, springing to his feet and confronting his accuser. "Are you mad, or what does this conduct mean? I demand an explanation, and a withdrawal of the opprobrious epithets you have been pleased to bestow upon me."

"You won't frighten me, young man," said the red vest, unbuttoning his coat with a furious jerk, and displaying the detested garment before Paul's eyes, as if conscious it would aggravate him—much in the same manner that a Spanish *toreador* would display a brilliant cloak before an enraged bull in the arena.

"It would appear from your conduct that you wish to frighten me," replied our hero; "but you will fail, sir. And once more I request an explanation and a withdrawal of the abusive expletives you so prodigally indulged in."

"I'll tell you what it is," said the red-vested personage, seating himself without invitation, and speaking in a low but ominous tone, "there is one thing which you must do—"

"I'll take no commands from you."

"You have robbed me, sir; as I said before, you have robbed me, and you must restore to me again!"

"It's false!"

"I've just come from Mrs. Darell's sir."

"So I should judge. But what has that to do with me?"

"Everything, sir. While there I learned all!"

"You are a wise man," said Paul, emphatically.

"Yes, sir, I learned all," continued the other, not heeding the remark. "I learned of your object there—of your perfidious conduct—"

"To what do you refer?" replied Paul indignantly.

"To what do I refer! To your intercourse with Mrs. Darell, sir! She told me everything. You were there this morning, and proposed for the hand of the fair—"

"Sir!" interrupted the young man, his face flushing with anger, "of what interest to you can my actions be? Why do you assume to dictate to me?"

"Why? Sir, have you not surreptitiously stolen away the heart of the lady to whom I had become unalterably attached? Have you not crossed my path, and grasped the fruit that has been ripening for me? Yes! She whom I have so long regarded as the one to become my future companion through life, I find, at the very moment I make my wishes known to her, has been inveigled into a promise of marriage with you."

"Ah! that is the solution of all this mysterious conduct on your part, is it? You have, then, been making proposals to the lady?"

"I have, sir, and from her own lips I learned that you had just forestalled me. She regretted much the disappointment I would feel—that but for you she would not have refused me."

"She said that, did she?" said Paul, tinged for a moment with jealousy.

"Yes, indeed. You are in the way, sir. But you must yield her up. I will not tamely endure such an encroachment upon my rights. No, sir! My name is Ruggles—Ruggles, sir, and I'll see you shot first!"

"Ah! then you have a name?"

"I will prove to you I have a name, and am worthy the name I bear. You must give the lady up, sir; I demand it!"

"Your conduct is excusable. You are no gentleman. I wish no further conversation with you. And be assured, sir, I shall never yield my claim to the hand of the lady."

"You will not?"

"I will not!"

"Then, sir, I will have satisfaction."

"As much as you desire."

"You shall fight me—"

"As soon as you please."

"With deadly weapons, sir!" cried the chivalrous Ruggles.

"With nine pounders, if it please you," replied Paul.

"I have a friend, sir—Captain Dobbs; he'll call upon you this very day. Prepare to refer him to a friend, for you shall fight me, sir!"

"And I repeat, I shall be happy to give you satisfaction in whatever manner you propose. Send your friend Dobbs along."

The redoubtable Ruggles started up, again hid his glowing vest from view by buttoning his coat closely around him, and retreated to the door. Halting as he grasped the latch, he turned once more to Paul, and with ferocious aspect, and brow still clouded with bitter hate, he exclaimed—

"Once more I request a retraction of all claim upon the lady. Relinquish her, and—"

"Never!" uttered Paul, firmly; "before I would relinquish the hand of the fair Christine, I would fight a legion of duellists!"

The stern expression on Ruggles's face relaxed a trifle, and he seemed somewhat puzzled at these words.

"Who did you mention?" he enquired.

"Who should I mention but Miss Christine Darell, the object of my warmest love."

The valorous Ruggles dropped his hat which he held at the moment in his hand, and advanced slowly toward Paul.

"Why do you attempt to deceive me!" he uttered in a modified tone, as he paused before his fancied rival.

"Deceive you!" repeated Paul in amazement; "I am not deceiving you; what reason have I for so doing?"

"Did you not say you loved Mrs. Darell's niece?"

"Most assuredly I did—what then?"

"What then! Why, sir, if such be the case, how dare you make love to the aunt?"

Paul looked astonished.

"Explain your meaning," he said; "I don't understand you."

"Bah! don't prevaricate, young man. I had it from Mrs. Darell herself, not an hour since, that you had offered her your hand and had been accepted."

"It is not so; you are mistaken."

"I cannot be."

"But you assuredly are. I never professed to love the lady."

"The lady, sir, is not capable of falsehood."

The truth suddenly flashed upon Paul.

"I understand," he cried, springing up. "It is true, I this morning called upon Mrs. Darell for the purpose of acquainting her with the love I bore—not her, but her lovely niece. I might not have been sufficiently explicit in my avowal, and she has misconceived me. I blindly imagined that she had seen the mutual attatchment of Christine and myself. Yes, it is plain enough now, and I am committed most strangely. It is the widow then to whom you are attached."

"To be sure."

"Then, my dear sir, we may both be rendered happy. Come, no more animosity between us—let us be friends."

"With all my heart," uttered the buoyant Ruggles, grasping the hand extended by his late antagonist.

"And now," said Paul, "we must set about a very delicate task—no less a one than that of undeceiving the fair widow."

Five minutes later they were in the street, walking arm in arm towards the residence of Mrs. Darell. Paul was slightly astonished, when he paused to think of the matter, that he should be so soon reconciled and on intimate terms with the possessor of that brilliant vest. But he now considered him one of the best of fellows.

"I had better enter alone," said Paul, on reaching the house, "and explain the whole affair. You can take a short promenade, and enter when you see me take my leave."

"You are right," responded Ruggles. "She might otherwise consider herself humiliated."

Two minutes after the young man was alone, once more, with the widow.

"I fear, my dear madam," said Paul, diving at once into the subject, after seating himself, "that you have made an estimable gentleman unhappy for life."

The lady looked excessively surprised.

"In what manner?" she inquired.

"In denying him a certain request which he made you."

"To whom do you refer."

"To the excellent Mr. Ruggles."

The widow's face became crimson.

"Then you have become acquainted with the incident?"

"I have."

"But who could have informed you?"

"The gentleman—himself."

"But, surely, you would not have had me replied otherwise than I did."

"Yes."

"What! you would have had me accept him?"

"Yes, madam."

The widow sat for an instant quite dumb. She knew not how to construe his words.

"Are you in earnest," she asked, "or is it jealousy that prompts you to this speech?"

"Jealousy! No, indeed, madam. But to come at once to the point, we separated this morning mutually deceived—you in supposing I had made you a tender of my hand, and I in supposing that you had given your consent to my marriage with Christine."

The widow was thunderstruck. She first became quite pale, and then the blood seemed all flowing to her cheek and brow.

"The fault was mine, I confess," said Paul, humbly, "for in my eagerness to know whether you would bestow on me dear Christine's hand, I presumed to infer that you had detected the object of my love, and I was not explicit enough in my language."

Mrs. Darell looked up, at length, and there was a smile which she could not repress upon her countenance.

"I accept your explanation," she frankly exclaimed; "but I hope, for my sake, you will never mention the occurrence. There are too many ludicrous ideas connected with it; and if Christine should learn the adventure, I should never hear the last of it."

"O, I promise, faithfully," said Paul, joining in the laugh which the widow raised.

"I see no other way, really. If I respected you enough to wed with you myself, I don't see that I can with propriety refuse to allow her to become yours."

"I know not how to express my thanks; but be assured I shall ever remain under the deepest obligations to you. I have gained a most excellent wife!"

"And I," said the widow, laughing, "have lost an admirable husband."

"O, no! There is one even now without, waiting my absence to throw himself at your feet—and a much more ardent lover, if I am to judge by the disappointment he expressed after being refused by you, than ever I could hope to make."

The fair widow blushed again, but shared heartily in the mirth of Paul. And he, with more apologies for the error he had unintentionally committed, took his leave. As he made his exit from the house, the impatient Ruggles was within three paces of the steps, advancing. Paul gave him an encouraging look, and uttered an inspiring word, indicative of hope, as he passed him, and the next moment the enamored man was pleading his suit anew.

It is to be inferred that the widow did not reject him this time. Be that as it may, four happy people were made two, at the residence of Mrs. Darell, a few weeks subsequent, and a trip to Niagara was the immediate result.

The final result has not yet transpired!

A CONTRAST.

Aurelia, though a woman of great quality, delights in the privacy of a country life, and passes away a great part of her time in her own walks and gardens. Her husband, who is her bosom friend and companion in her solitudes, has been in love with her ever since he knew her. They both abound with good sense, consummate virtue and a mutual esteem; and are a perpetual entertainment to one another. Their family is under so regular an economy, in its hours of devotion and repast, employment and diversion, that it looks like a little commonwealth within itself. They often go into company, that they may return with the greater delight to one another; and sometimes live in town, not to enjoy it so properly, as to grow weary of it, that they may renew in themselves the relish of a country life. By this means they are happy in each other, beloved by their children, adored by their servants, and are become the envy, or rather the delight of all that know them.

How different to this is the life of Fulvia! She considers her husband as her steward, and looks upon discretion and good housewifery as little domestic virtues, unbecoming a woman of quality. She thinks life lost in her own family, and fancies herself out of the world when she is not in the ring, the playhouse, or the drawing-room. She lives in a perpetual motion of body and restlessness of thought, and is never easy in any one place, when she thinks there is more company in another. The missing of an Opera the first night, would be more afflicting to her than the death of a child. She pities all the valuable part of her own sex, and calls every woman of a prudent, modest, and retired life, a poor-spirited, unpolished creature. What a mortification would it be to Fulvia, if she knew that her setting herself to view is but exposing herself, and that she grows contemptible by being conspicuous!

STRAWBERRIES.

When beds of strawberries are made in the spring, April and May is the time. Beds made in the autumn seldom produce much, if any, fruit the following season, and, unless the plants are very well rooted, they are apt to be injured or wholly destroyed by the succeeding winter. The soil where the bed is to be made should be rich, and spaded or trenched very deep; the plants are usually set out in rows twelve to fifteen inches, and the rows twelve to twenty-four inches. Some fine varieties, as Hovey's seedling and many others, will not fruit by themselves, as they are pistillate sorts, the flowers having pistils only, without any stamens; hence it is necessary to mix staminate sorts with them, to ensure their bearing well. Large, early scarlet, a staminate variety, is generally planted for this purpose.

THE LITTLE LAME MAN.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

Ella Green was just nineteen. Sweet, pretty, good Ella! Everybody loved her, for she was kind and smiling to everybody, and never spoke ill of any one when she could help it. And then she was a beautiful creature, too,—always happy and gay when those about her were happy, and wearing sweet smiles continually. And such a lovely face—and that, too, without hardly a regular feature in it;—but then her features were all made to go together. The consequence was that the little pug nose looked pretty because it harmonized with the plump cheeks, and with the dimpled, double chin, and with the rosy lips. And though her eyes were grey, yet they were so bright, and the warm love-light dwelt there so much, that they were the prettiest eyes ever seen.—Some envious folks said she had a red head; but she hadn't—not a bit of it. A brighter, purer auburn was never seen, and when the sunlight danced upon it her head seemed crowned with gleaming gold. But all this was as nothing compared with the beauty of mind and soul which marked Ella Green. In fact, I think those same features would have looked very homely had they been mated with a bad disposition. It was the very light of her soul that shed such a beauty all about her.

Ella sat in her own easy chair by the window playing with a kitten, and close by, at another window, sat her Aunt Nancy. Nancy Green was now sixty years of age—a tall, prim woman, with very grey hair, and very sharp, grey eyes. She was a maiden sister of Ella's father, and now had charge of the young girl. Mr. Green had been gone away from home a great while—many years—and most people thought him dead; but Ella was fully persuaded that her father would come back; and she prayed for his safety every night and morning.

"Now look here, Miss Ella," spoke up Aunt Nancy, "suppose you put down that kitten and take up your knitting?"

"Aha, aunty dear," cried the happy girl, with a laugh, "my knitting is all done."

"Done? What d'ye mean? I gave ye the whole stocking to knit."

"No, no, aunty."

"Yes, I did."

"No, no, aunty dear."

"But I tell you I *did*—there."

"No, aunty—you gave me the yarn, and I was to *make* the whole stocking,—which is all done. See."

And thus speaking Ella pulled out from the bag by her side a very neatly fashioned stocking just about large enough for her own little foot.

"Oh, you torment, you," uttered Aunt Nancy. "But I *should* like to know what your fingers are made of."

"Made after the same fashion as your own, dear aunt; and I hope they may live to do as much good as yours have done."

Aunt Nancy put the corner of her apron up to her eye, and pretended that she was trying to remove a mote which had lodged there. But Ella knew, and springing to aunty's side she flung her arms about her neck and kissed her sweetly, and then calling to her kitten she bounded from the room.

"Oh, murmured the old lady, as the fair girl disappeared, "what a blessing that child is! God grant that no clouds come upon her, for she don't deserve them—indeed she don't."

Just after Ella had gone out a young man entered the room, and having looked around a few moments he took the very seat which the maiden had just before vacated. His name was Arthur Raymond. He was only one-and-twenty, and had just served out his apprenticeship and gone at work as a journeyman carpenter. He was a good looking youth—mild and honest; with a countenance free from all marks of vice and dissipation, and evincing a vast deal more of real intelligence than is often found in one of his years and position. He was just such a youth as would at once win upon the respect and esteem of a noble heart, and never lose what he had won.

"Miss Ella is not in," said Arthur, in a low, tremulous tone.

"No,—she's just gone out," returned Aunt Nancy; and as she spoke she gazed upon the youth with a kind of pitying look.

Arthur sat twirling his straw hat upon one of his thumbs, and at length he seemed to have plucked up the courage he needed.

"Aunt Nancy," he said (everybody called her so) "I want to ask you a plain, honest question."

"Go on, Arthur. You needn't be afraid of me."

"Well—what I want to ask is just this: Do you think there is any hope of my winning Ella for my wife. Oh—you don't know how long I've been getting courage to speak this to even you. But it's out now. I love her dearly, and I would never see her suffer. But I want to know now, for if there is no hope, then the sooner I tear myself away from the bright illusion the better. And yet I hope I may win her"

"Well, Arthur," returned the old lady, kindly and frankly, "you have done well; but I cannot give you a definite answer, nor can Ella. Do you know how her father left matters when he went away?"

"No."

"Well—I'll tell you. Let me see—it's now going on twelve years since he went away, and Ella was then only seven years old. When he went he placed her in my charge, for I had promised to take the place of her dead mother. You know Mr. Mathewson asked to be her father's partner in business.—Yes—Well—James Mathewson was then eleven, and my brother said this.—You must know that Nathan—that's my brother's name—always set a great deal by little James Mathewson—and he said this: said he,—'If, when Ella grows up she loves James Mathewson, she may marry him; but don't let her marry any one else till I come home, or until she is twenty-one years of age.' Now you see just how the matter stands. When my poor brother will come home I know not. Perhaps those pesky Injuns off in the Pacific may have eat him up. Oh! it's dreadful to think of."

This was the usual channel of Aunt Nancy's fears when speaking of her brother. And no wonder she held some fears, for not one word had she heard from him for over five years. The last time they had a letter from him he was just going to the Sandwich Islands.

"But I should be good and kind to her, Aunt Nancy. Oh, I would never speak one unkind word to her."

"I don't think you would, Arthur, but still you must wait."

"And if I wait—if I wait so long—may not—a—James Mathewson——"

"Stop, Arthur. If he loves Ella, and Ella loves him, that is enough."

With a bowed head, and face strongly marked with pain, Arthur Raymond arose from his seat, and without another word left the house.

That very evening James Mathewson came to see Ella Green. He was a young man, some three and twenty, and though what the world called handsome, yet it was not a manly beauty. It was the ball-room, boudoir, effeminate beauty, which needs to be kept from the rough-and-tumble of life if you would have it preserved.

Now Ella Green did not really love young Mathewson, but she liked his company because he was so gay and lively, and because he talked about things and places which she had never seen. And then she knew that her father had spoken of her marrying with him, and perhaps that influenced her some, for she would not have disobeyed her father for worlds.

That evening James asked her to become his wife. He said he wished to be married very soon. It was now Spring, and he wanted a wife to go with him to the springs in the Summer. Ella trembled some as she listened, to this, and for the first time in her life she asked herself seriously what kind of a husband James would make.

She would not give him an answer that evening.

* * * * *

At the village inn, where the stages stopped—for all this was before railroads cut the country up—a party of young men were collected, and they seemed to be enjoying themselves much—if such convivial scenes can be called enjoyment. While they were thus engaged one of the stages drove up to the door, and the youths went out "to see who had come." Among the passengers was a litle old man who walked very lame, one leg being much shorter than the other. He was a comical looking man, not over five feet high, and very fat for so small a person. His dress was very odd, being all out of fashion, and the young men laughed heartily at the figure he cut. His three-cornered hat, and his round-cut coat, and his broad-flapped waistcoat, and his knee-breeches and silk hose, with great silver buckles on his shoes—all looked very funny. Had these youths looked at the old man's face—for he was at least three-score—they would have seen that he was very benevolent and kind in his looks, and that their jibes gave him pain. But they thought not of that. They were in for sport.

But by and by the odd little lame man was seated quietly in one corner of the room, with a paper in his hand, and the young men were at their cups.

"Now say, Jim,—do you really mean that you can have Ella Green for your wife?"

"Yes———!" It was a very deep oath which James Mathewson uttered; and the little lame man started as though something hurt him; but no one noticed him.

"Yes, I will marry her, and her money, too."

"But do you know that she's got money?"

"Aye—lots of it. And then that antiquated aunt of hers is a perfect gold mine, and Ella'll come in for all of that. Ho! I'm all right. And so here's another glass to the fair one; and may her father come home alive if he only comes rich!"

The little man acted just as though something hurt him again, for he started half up from his chair, and when he sank down again he hid his face behind his newspaper.

"But," said one of the party, "isn't Arthur Raymond rather thick around those corners?"

"Pooh!" uttered Mathewson, contemptuously, "do ye s'pose she'd marry with a journeyman carpenter when she can have me?"

"Who do ye call a journeyman carpenter?" asked a great stout artisan who had entered a few moments before, but had not been noticed by the youths. He was a middle-aged man, roughly clad, and covered with the dust of toil.

"None of your business!" cried Mathewson, contemptuously.

"Very well," returned the man. "I know who ye spoke of. 'Twas of Arthur Raymond, the noble boy who has supported a widowed mother for these six years. *You* call him names! *You*, who are of no more use in society than a fly on a coach wheel! You'd better mend your manners, youngsters, all of ye, and you, James Mathewson, in particular."

With these words the stout artisan went out followed by curses loud and deep, the most horrible of which were from Mathewson. They would have attacked the man had he been smaller, but they dared not trust themselves within his mighty grasp. As soon as the bold speaker reached the stoop the little lame man followed him out, and drawing off a little distance the two conversed for some time.

* * * * *

Poor Arthur Raymond! He could not live over another day without seeing Ella, so when evening came again he wended his way towards the pretty cot where she lived. He found her in, and, as fortune would have it, Aunt Nancy was out. He bowed very politely as he entered, and Ella seemed very glad to see him. Some ten minutes were spent in conversation upon extraneous topics, and then Arthur introduced the one great subject that was uppermost in his mind. His voice trembled some, and he was otherwise affected, but he spoke plainly and to the point.

"Ella Green," he commenced, "I must speak now of the subject which at present holds in check all my hopes of life. You know I love you, for I told you that years ago, when we were children; and I can only say that since then my love has grown stronger and deeper. Now be plain with me. You know my position, and you know that if you join your destinies with mine you will have to help me work my way up through the hard world. And knowing this, and knowing me as you do, can you love me well enough to become my wife?"

But ere she could speak James Mathewson himself entered the room. He gazed first upon Ella, and then upon Arthur. Then his face grew red with anger, and his teeth were firmly set.

"What are you doing here, sir?" he cried, with a mad, threatening look.

"I do not acknowledge your right to question me," was Arthur's calm reply.

"You don't, eh? Then just take yourself away from here, and *keep* yourself away."

"Neither do I admit your right to command me," responded Arthur, with a flashing eye.

"Oho! you're getting bold in presence of a lady. Ella, my dear, excuse me a moment while I put this fellow out."

"Oh! no, no, no!" cried the frightened girl.

Of course Mathewson knew that Ella would interfere, for he would have no more dared to place his hand upon Arthur Raymond than he would have dared to face a loaded cannon with a lighted match at the priming. But before any further movement could be made some one knocked at the front door, and Aunt Nancy, who was up stairs at the time, came down to answer the summons. She opened the door, and in a few moments more admitted our little lame man. He came hobbling into the sitting-room, and took a seat close by Ella.

"Ah—good evening, sir," he said to Mathewson.

"You have the advantage of me, sir," the youth replied, drawing himself proudly up.

"But I saw you at the tavern last evening, I believe."

"And if you did what matters it! Such acquaintance hardly upholds familiarity."

"Oh—I meant no offence, I assure you."

"I presume not." And thus speaking, in a very condescending tone, James Mathewson turned to Ella, and commenced conversation with her. But she took little notice of what he said, for she was interested in the appearance of the odd looking visiter.

"I was informed that I might find Nancy Green here," the old man said, turning towards Aunt Nancy.

"Yes, sir—that is my name," the woman answered.

"Ah—so old?" uttered the queer man, glancing his eye over Aunt Nancy's person.

"*Old*, sir?" gasped the matron, indignantly. "What do you mean?"

"Why—they called you *Miss* Nancy, and I surely expected to find a more youthful person."

"You did, did you? Yes—I s'pose so. And may I ask what your business may be with *Miss* Nancy Green?"

"O, certainly," returned the stranger, not at all moved by the spitefulness of the lady's reply. "I understood that you would be glad of a partner for life, and that you also had money. Now as I was alone in the world, and as I was informed you were alone, I hoped we might make some sort of a match of it for the rest of our days. But I did not expect to find you looking quite so old."

"*Old!* Whom do you call old? Marry with *me?* Oh! you little, old, dried-up, game-legged, weezen-faced, yellow-skinned, impudent good-for-nothing, you! What d'ye mean?" And as Aunt Nancy thus concluded she actually puffed with the excitement of the effort.

"But God made me what I am," said the old man, mildly.

"So God placed these years upon me," retorted Nancy.

"Aye," replied the little lame man, with a moistened eye, and with deep feeling in his tone, "God has let his servant, Time, work wonderfully upon us both during the years that have passed. The old fellow with his glass and scythe has surely been with us. He has touched your brow with frost, and drawn some lines across your brow. So he has been at work upon me. And see: he has broken my leg, and the ignorant savages knew not how to set it properly. But, Nancy, I trust he has not laid his frosty finger upon our hearts."

Aunt Nancy gazed for one moment more into the old man's face, and then she started to her feet.

"Oh! you plague!" she uttered, as she rushed forward and caught the lame man to her bosom. "Oh! how could you? Nathan! Nathan! Oh, my dear, dear, brother!"

There was one low cry from Ella's lips as she bounded from her chair, and on the next moment she was hanging about her father's neck. She cried and laughed by turns, and the words which fell from her lips were wild and incoherent.

But such a scene could not last always. By and by the old man took a seat, and his sister and child were upon either side; and even know they knew not whether to laugh or cry.

At length Mr. Green turned toward young Matthewson.

"James Matthewson," he said, in a serene tone, "of course you know what I overheard at the inn last evening. I will not tell you how pained I was. I will only tell you that not for worlds would I place a thing I loved in the hands of a youth with such feelings as you have exhibited. You remember the wish you expressed with regard to Ella's father. I will simply tell you that your wish is fulfilled. The father has come home—and rich, too. I am sorry—but I know you well. You can leave us now."

James Matthewson spoke not a word. He knew that the character he had managed to hide from the daughter was known to the father, and he had nothing to say—only one deep curse dropped from his lips as he reached the door. And perhaps 'twas well he uttered that curse, for it drove the last lingering doubt from Ella's mind.

"Hold on—stop!" cried the old man, as Arthur, too, arose to leave, "I would see you yet awhile longer."

With a trembling step Arthur Raymond returned to his seat, and when the outer door had closed upon the retiring form of young Matthewson, the old man resumed,—

"You remember me, do you not, Arthur?"

"Yes, sir—well. How could I ever forget you? Was it not you who extended the helping hand to my dying father, and who saved my mother after that father was gone? And was it——"

"Yes, yes—I know. I see you remember me. And now do you suppose that you could make a return for the care I once bestowed upon your parents?"

"Anything in my power, sir," answered Arthur, fervently.

"Well—I must have some one to take charge of this piece of property by and by.—Say, my child, would it be painful for you to have Arthur for a keeper?"

Ella laid her head upon her father's bosom, and while his arm found its way about her fair form, she whispered—"Oh, no!" Arthur placed his handkerchief to his eyes, and his broad bosom heaved with a wild, grateful emotion.

After this, when the first outburst had given place to a calmer joy, the old man gathered the happy trio about him and told them all about his adventures—how he had been first to Canton and traded there six years,—and then how he went to the Sandwich Islands—and then down to the Society Islands—and how he had traded all about the world, and made a great deal of money. And then he told them how he had his leg broken at Otaheite, and how he was laid up a whole year with it. He said he had sent several letters, but he was sorry to find that none of them had arrived at their destination. And so the evening wore away.

Reader, not far up the Hudson there is a beautiful mansion, the garden of which slopes almost down to the water's edge. Arthur and Ella live there, and sometimes, when you pass it, you will see a white-haired old man out upon the lawn playing with two laughing boys. He is a happy old grandfather, is our Little Lame Man, now; and Aunt Nancy has consented to live with him for the rest of her days, notwithstanding she took such a miff when the subject was first mentioned.

LONDON, PARIS AND NEW YORK FASHIONS.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ENGRAVINGS.

Fig 1.—(*Bride's Dress.*)—Robe of white silk. The skirt covered with four flounces of Brussels lace. The corsage is high, and is fastened up the front by a row of diamond buttons, and bretelles of lace pass from each shoulder down to the point in front of the waist. A round collar of Brussels lace turns over the top of the corsage. The sleeves are formed of four very small puffs of silk, finished by two broad ruffles of Brussels lace. Bracelets set with pearls and diamonds. The bridal veil consists of a long scarf of *tulle illusion*. It is drawn and plaited up in the middle, and fixed at the back part of the head, the two ends flowing down over the back and shoulders. The wreath is composed of a mixture of orange blossom and white lilac. The Prayer-book is bound in boards of carved ivory, fastened by clasps of silver. The edges of the leaves are silvered.

Fig. 2.—(*Dress for a Wedding Dejeuner.*)—Robe of azure blue silk, with three flounces, edged with a trimming of blue velvet of a shade darker than the silk. The velvet trimming is set on in a lozenge pattern, and at each side there is a straight row of velvet and a row of narrow black guipure. The corsage is high, and fastened up the front by buttons of blue silk passamenterie. The bretelles are trimmed with velvet, in the same style as the flounces. The sleeves are formed of one large puff and a frill. Collar of Alencon lace. The under-sleeves are formed of two puffs of tulle, separated by a band of white satin ribbon, fastened in a bow, and ends on the outer part of the arm. The front hair is disposed in curls semi-craped, and the back of the head is ornamented by bows and ends of blue velvet.